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Responding to Diversity: Examination of a Small, Rural School's Response to its Changing Demographic

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Responding to Diversity: Examination of a Small, Rural School's Response to a Changing Demographic

by

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to the *angels* that have opened my eyes at various points in my life, guiding me through an incredible educational journey. Family, friends, colleagues, professors, and former students…you are my inspiration.

Especially to my amazing family…to my mom and dad, Janice and Jesse, if not for your initial encouragement to excel and unconditional support, this document would not have transpired. And to my wonderful husband, Eric, whom I admire and adore, thank you for continuing to encourage my endeavors….

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Be the change you want to see in the world. ~ Ghandi

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Responding to Diversity: Examination of a Small, Rural School's Response to a Changing Demographic

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As the nation's schools continue to increase in diversity, teachers are faced with numerous challenges regarding how to meet the needs and strengths of diverse student populations. In addition, small, rural schools tend not only to lack in resources, but may not be adequately prepared to understand student backgrounds, unable to support diverse learners' social and cultural well-being, especially those consisting of a homogenous, Caucasian staff. This qualitative case study examined one small, rural school's response to a changing demographic, particularly in its Latino student population. Specific attention was given to teachers' attitudes, views, and perceptions regarding their Latino student learners.

Faculty members' interviews served as the primary data collection method coupled with an examination of current school documents and notes from a researcher's journal. The three data collection methods provided insight into the research questions: 1) how does a small, rural school respond to its changing demographic, particularly in its Latino student population?; and 2) What are the views, perceptions, and attitudes of staff members regarding the school's Latino student population?

The major findings suggest that the school displayed evidence of increased support in training, resources, and students' culture over recent years; however, much training and resources are still necessary to effectively meet the needs and strengths of diverse learners within the school. At times, the evidence revealed teachers not taking responsibility of diverse learners' needs and strengths, placing blame on outside factors. Additionally, faculty members offered many examples of students' needs, but had difficulty identifying students' strengths. Staff members held narrowed views of what inhibited student learning and did not possess a thorough understanding of culturally responsive teaching practices. Also, teachers' and administrators' views varied from those they perceived of their colleagues; and lastly, generalizations latent with pity were evident in some responses.

The results of the research contribute to the contemporary literature regarding teacher belief systems regarding diverse learners, how they perceive students of color, and how understanding these perceptions might help educators devise practices that will more successfully meet diverse learners' needs and strengths. Current research lacks in teacher perspectives; this research intends to add to the existing dialogue.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Change and diversity - no two words better describe the challenges facing the nation and its educational system (Spears, Oliver, & Maes, 1990, p. 3).

As the nation's educational systems continue to become more diverse, schools reflect a larger population that has experienced rapid change in the past few decades. Many educators embrace the array of ethnicities and cultures that permeate the hallways of their schools; however, some teachers are left in a quandary about how to educate a body of students who may be very different from themselves in terms of customs, beliefs, and even language. Current research on small schools and diverse populations lacks teachers' perspectives and beliefs. We do not know much about how small rural schools respond to diverse populations, and research literature yields even less information about teacher perceptions and attitudes toward diverse learners. Although the need for change in schools inundates contemporary literature (Brunn, 2002; Huang, 1999; Levin, 1994; Ward, 1994), little research reflects if schools *understand* the challenges they face or even *how* to respond to the changes (Levin, 1994).

Growing Diversity in the United States

Diversity in the United States is increasing rapidly (Planty et al., 2008; Dilworth & Brown, 2001; Rozema, 1996; Ward, 1994). More specifically, the majority of the population surge is a result of the nation's Latino population. Sixty percent of total public school growth is attributed to the Latino student population (Fry & Gonzales, 2008). The Condition of Education (Planty et al., 2008) reports that since 1986 the Latino student population in the United States has risen 11%, representing about 20% of public school enrollment. The demographic influx across the nation has especially affected rural communities and schools.

Diversity in Rural and Small Schools

Rural schools and communities share a common bond that is not often apparent in urban areas (Ward, 1994). As a result of changing economics and demographics in rural communities, rural schools have experienced both negative and positive effects (Huang, 1999). Some researchers believe that change in rural schools can occur more easily (Spears, Oliver, and Maes, 1990) while others feel that rural communities and schools struggle (Shoho & Petrisky, 1996; Wrigley, 2000), finding it difficult to adequately attend to the needs of growing numbers of diverse learners.

One of the challenges that rural schools face is the growing number of students who live in poverty. Many families of color live below the poverty level in rural areas (Dilworth & Brown, 2001; Huang, 1999) where schools may have less access to resources (Spear et al., 1990; Wrigley, 2000). Additionally, Huang (1999) finds that the more concentrated a rural area is with immigrants, the greater the demand for spending. "[Rural] immigrants have attained, on average, less education relative to urban immigrants" (p. 5) thus, more resources are required to help compensate for educational needs. What is more disturbing is that high school completion rates are lower among Latino students compared to other ethnic groups and, unfortunately, seem to be widening (Huang, 1999). These examples illustrate some of the concerns rural schools face with increasing students of color.

Much akin to rural schools, small schools that reside outside of rural areas strive to address challenges of educating diverse learners. Several researchers attest that small schools provide for students' educational opportunities and successes that larger schools cannot (Gladden, 1998; Holland, 2002). Some positive attributes include increased student achievement,

higher attendance rates, lower behavior infractions and less violence; strong teacher collegiality, care for students, and having a "voice" to share amongst one another are also inherent (Holland, 2002).

Teaching Diverse Learners

At times, teachers who are accustomed to teaching a homogenous student population are unprepared to teach students of color (Brunn, 2002). Overwhelmed by pressures to meet the needs of diverse learners (Levin, 1994; McNeil, Thousand, & Nevin, 1996), today's teachers frequently feel helpless, unable to ask questions or obtain answers that will enable them to adapt to a diversified classroom (Wrigley, 2000). Teachers' attitudes toward their students' cultures and race are also integral elements in educating all students (Dilworth & Brown, 2001); fortunately, many educators and researchers see that educational support is growing to meet the needs of diverse learners (Spears et al., 1990).

The call for teacher-preparation programs to assist teachers in developing skills to meet diverse students' needs remains strong (Berg-Tilton, DePauw, & Hermmann, 1996; Cochran-Smith, 1995; Nieto, 1999; Sleeter, 2001). In addition, ongoing teacher education and professional development proves imperative (Dilworth & Brown, 2001; Spears et al., 1990) in order to foster educational environments where teachers are encouraged to reflect on teaching practices. Brunn (2000) and Paley (2000) observe that teachers' perspectives are missing from the discussion among researchers and educators concerning how to best meet the strengths and needs of students of color, promoting success for all learners. A prevalent theme in the literature focuses upon the necessity for educational institutions to foster opportunities for teachers to reflect on their beliefs and knowledge, encouraging involvement in their own learning process and professional development (Brunn, 2000).

Change in Schools

Levin (1994) emphasizes that professional literature is saturated with advocacy for change in schools stating, "The call for schools to adapt is strong, if not very united" (p.1); however, "many think that schools are not changing enough" (p. 2) or as quickly as they should be. Research indicates that schools are changing, but little work specifies if schools understand the process or recognize how to respond to the changes they face (Levin, 1994).

An additional impetus for my research involves a particular study that examined teacher response to demographic change in schools. Michael Brunn (2000) interviewed the staff of a rural school, investigating their perceptions and belief systems after the school experienced a sudden increase in its Latino student population. The research was employed to identify best practices that would enhance the learning environment of the incoming population. Similarly, my research will also inspect teacher perceptions and attitudes in a homogenously white, small, rural school as the members adapt to the steady change in demographics. Like Brunn's (2002) study, this research's end result intends to enhance the conversations, adding to the lack of research findings regarding the improvement of educating diverse learners by understanding the views and attitudes of teachers.

John Dewey's Theory of Experience

John Dewey's (1938) theory of experience calls for a *new education* that, unlike traditional education, perceives schools as an instrument of social reform that acknowledges the present experience of the learner and embraces democratic ideals.

> Can we find any reason that does not ultimately come down to the belief that democratic social arrangements promote a better quality of human experience, one which is more widely accessible and enjoyed, than do non-democratic and anti-democratic forms of social life? (Dewey, 1938, p. 35)

Dewey (1938) contends that human experience must be understood to design effective education. Dewey's theory of experience is based on two fundamental principles. First, *continuity* or *experimental continuum* is a principle involved to "discriminate between experiences that are worthwhile educationally and those that are not" (p. 33). Education is created within experience and that experience is important. The second principle, *interaction,* extends from continuity and assigns equal rights to both objective and internal conditions. "Any normal experience is an interplay of these two sets of conditions. Taken together, or in their interaction, they form what we call a *situation*" (Dewey, 1938, p. 42).

Ignoring the internal experience, Dewey (1938) describes traditional education as static, ". . .that which is taught is a finished product with little regard either to the ways in which it was originally built up or to changes that will surely occur in the future" (p. 19). The newer philosophy, referred to as progressive education, is ". . . found in the idea that there is an intimate and necessary relation between the processes of actual experience and education" (p. 20) and, "It is the business of the educator to see in what direction an experience is heading" (p. 38). Dewey (1938) continues:

> . . . it is his business to be on the alert to see what attitudes and habitual tendencies are being created. In this direction he must, if he is an educator, be able to judge what attitudes are detrimental. He must, in addition, have that sympathetic understanding of individuals as individuals which gives him an idea of what is actually going on in the minds of those who are learning. (p. 39)

In the subsequent research, the lived experiences of faculty members drive the study, examining closely their attitudes and beliefs regarding the demographics within their school. Allowing this internal experience to emerge will assist in further understanding the school's response to its Latino student population, closely examining their perspectives of the shifting demographic milieu.

Overview and Research Design

Dewey' theoretical framework enables me to engage in understanding the perceptions and attitudes of faculty members as they experience a changing demographic, particularly in their Latino student population.

The following questions guided my research study:

1. How does a small, rural high school respond to a changing demographic, particularly in the Latino student population?
2. What are the faculty members' perceptions, views, and attitudes regarding the high school's Latino student population?

Employing these guiding questions, I gained a better understanding of how one small, rural school responded to diversity within its educational environment. In doing so, I complement the contemporary literature with descriptions of how a small, rural school addressed the needs and strengths of diverse learners. "Just as no man lives or dies to himself, so no experience lives and dies to itself. Wholly independent of desire or intent, every experience lives on in further experience" (Dewey, 1938, p. 27). Understanding the attitudes and perceptions of teachers and administrators experiencing this common phenomenon should encourage future experiences that respond positively to diverse student populations.

The next chapter offers an extensive, although limited, literature review in the following areas: historical context, rural communities and schools, small schools, response to change in schools, Latino students' experiences, response to diverse learners, defining racism and prejudice, need for race conversations, white teachers, culturally responsive teaching and teacher agency, lack of teacher diversity and the need for teacher training, current instructional strategies, and lastly, the lack of teacher perspectives in the literature. In chapter 3, I delineate

the methodologies that are utilized, including the paradigm that the study is situated within, the site and participants, data collection methods, data analysis, validity and reliability, as well as ethical considerations. Chapter 4 reveals the results from the research; to conclude, chapter 5 highlights the major findings and implications of the study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

If we are to become a community of many cultures, then we must begin in the heart of the community; the school (Berg-Tilton, DePauw, & Herrmann, 1996).

Introduction

Diversity is a reality embraced by many educators in our nation's schools that in some cases may invoke anxiety and instability. Whichever the case, increases in diversity can significantly affect all elements of contemporary schooling. Teaching diverse learners is an inevitable phenomenon in schools throughout the nation, and to successfully educate the students within, we must look positively on this existing characteristic of the current educational system.

Currently in the United States, teachers face a multitude of challenges such as tackling high stakes testing and its consequences, preventing school dropouts, and providing curriculum for students with wide-ranging abilities and skills. However, none seem as daunting as meeting the socio-cultural and educational needs of diverse learners. Teachers and school administrators seek answers from research in the field, teacher-preparation programs, professional development, and dialogues with colleagues regarding how to best address students' differing needs.

As teachers strive to discover these answers, students of color within their classrooms continue to grow. What adds to the conundrum is that students of color enter urban classrooms where programs exist that assist teachers in understanding students' cultural differences and needs. Likewise, students of color enter small, rural schools that may not have the resources for teacher professional development, curriculum resources, and additional support staff such as ESL teachers. Faced with this reality, small schools are affected by a rapidly changing school population, leaving some teachers baffled about how to teach diverse student groups about which they know so little, unequipped to adequately educate them due to a lack of knowledge,

resources, and funds.

More specifically, Latino students are increasing in the U.S. at a skyrocketing rate, even in rural schools. In these typically small school settings, school districts often have less access to resources. Even more challenging, teachers in small school settings may be unsure about how to serve students from diverse backgrounds. Thus, Latino students find themselves in an environment where their academic and cultural needs and strengths may not be met as well as those of other student populations. Many teachers wish to fulfill their students' cultural, academic, and social needs, but are frustrated because they lack the knowledge to do so.

Little research seems to specifically address *teacher* response to diversity, especially white teachers in small, rural schools. This research addresses some of these concerns, closely studying small, rural school teachers' and administrators' perspectives and attitudes toward Latino students, reflecting on what they *are doing* and what they feel *should be done* to best educate their students. The research is guided by the following questions:

1. How does a small, rural high school respond to a changing demographic, particularly in the Latino student population?
2. What are the faculty members' perceptions, views, and attitudes regarding the high school's Latino student population?

The subsequent literature review uncovers many common threads that help us understand one small, rural school's response to its Latino student population. I begin by historically outlining the increases in Latino students in Texas and across the nation. More specifically, an illustration of the characteristics of small, rural communities and schools is provided. Current response to change in schools highlights examples of contemporary research. Students' perspectives and needs are noted, followed by teacher attitudes and their response to

demographics. A brief examination of race today and the need for conversations regarding race is illustrated along with a specific look at white teachers of diverse learners and culturally responsive teaching. The importance of diversifying the teaching profession and a look at teacher education and professional development is included. Lastly, current instructional programs and the need for more teacher perspectives in the literature end this review.

Historical Context: Increasing Diversity

From its founding, the United States has periodically experienced cycles of immigrants from many differing ethnic and religious backgrounds, a demographic trend that continues to increase the cultural diversity of American society today (Oliver & Howley, 1992; Rong & Priessle, 2009). The influx of immigrants to the United States is most apparent in our schools (Berg-Tilton, DePauw & Herrmann, 1996; Dilworth & Brown, 2001). As a result, schools in the United States have a student population that is rapidly increasing in diversity (Berg-Tilton et al., 1996; Dilworth & Brown, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Planty et al., 2008; Rong & Preissle, 2009; Rozema, 1996; Ward, 1994). Dilworth and Brown (2001) note that the diversity surge is most predominant in school-aged children; hence, children of color will eclipse Caucasian children by the middle of the century. The Condition of Education 2008 reported these 2006 enrollment statistics: Hispanic - 20%, Black - 16%, Asian - 3.6%, Pacific Islander - .2%, American Indian/Alaskan Native - .7%, students of more than one race - 2.7% (Planty et al., 2008). Interestingly, the number of students who are Caucasian has decreased from 78% to 57% from 1972- 2006 (Planty et al., 2008). By 2020, 46% of the population in the United States ages 0 - 18 will be persons of color (Rozema, 1996).

In twenty years, it is projected that one in six residents of the United States will be of Latino origin; by the middle of the century, one in four will be Latino (Wrigley, 2000). “Over

60% of Latinos are of Mexican ancestry, a population that includes U.S.-born Mexican Americans (also known as Chicanos) whose families may have been in the Southwest for many generations as well as recent Mexican immigrants" (Tatum, 1997, p. 133).

Latino student enrollment surpasses all other students of color groups (Condition of Education 2008; Rong & Priessle, 2009) and continues to rise (Dilworth & Brown, 2001; Stevens, Hamman, & Olivarez, 2007; Wrigley, 2000). Fry and Gonzales (2008) noted that Latino students nearly doubled from 1990 to 2006 in schools across the country, accounting for 60% of total public school growth. In grades kindergarten through high school, there are roughly 10 million Latino students. The U.S. Census Bureau projects that this strong enrollment growth will continue and that Latino school-aged children will increase 166% by 2050 while the non-Latino population will grow by just 4% (Fry & Gonzales, 2008).

In 2006, Latino students represented about 20% of public school enrollment; this is an increase from 11% in 1986, (Condition of Education, 2008) more than any other student group of color (Rong & Preissle, 2009). Currently, Latino students are the largest ethnic group in public schools in twenty-two states (Fry & Gonzales, 2008). In Texas, more than 40% of public school students are Latino; only two other states' percentages, Arizona and New Mexico, are as high (Fry & Gonzales, 2008).

Over the years, changing diversity patterns have prompted various reactions. McNeil, Thousand, and Nevin (1996) outline four responses to human difference or diversity that has transpired over the years. First, there was a period of marginalization and segregation of people that were different. Later, reform emerged and programs were developed to create greater "normalcy." Reform eventually led to tolerance, enabling more acceptance of diversity. Now, students are educated in a time of value leading to social justice. Statements of resignation

(tolerance) are being replaced with statements of value. Many more teachers are taking responsibility to meet the needs of *all* children (McNeil et al., 1996). Additionally, Rong and Preissle (2009) note two key approaches to the education of immigrant children: assimilation (eliminating ethnic boundaries) and pluralism (accommodating ethnic cultures). The latter approach is entrenched in the philosophies that underlie culturally responsive teaching; this discussion is elaborated in more detail later in the chapter.

The growing diversity in school population influences the country's decision makers (Banks, 1993) and, ultimately, educators. Creamier-Wilhelm & Karr-Kidwell (1995) add that, "Coming to grips with and facing the cultural change will increase the possibility of improving racial and cultural understanding" (p. 17). As the number of diverse learners pours into schools, teachers face numerous challenges. Therefore, the question resonates: How do educators respond?

The following section illuminates demographic changes and responses specifically in rural communities and schools.

Rural Communities

Soon after the United State's inception, many immigrants settled in rural areas (Oliver & Howley, 1992). As the country began to flourish, continued immigration contributed to a steady increase in population. During the 1980s, our nation's population grew drastically; in the 1990s, rural communities began to grow at the same pace, if not faster (Huang, 1999). Now, approximately one fourth of the population lives in rural areas (Spears et al., 1990).

At one time, Latino migrants settled in urban areas; however, now there is a dramatic increase in their movement to rural areas (Huang, 1999; Wrigley, 2000). In fact, the largest group of rural immigrants is Mexican (Huang, 1999). We now find rural communities that are far

less homogeneous than those just 50 years ago (Spears et al., 1990). The population in rural areas has become more racially, ethnically, linguistically, and culturally diverse (Ward, 1994).

At the same time, the character of rural life has also changed (Deaton & McNamara, 1984); therefore, rural communities are responding to a variety of economic, technological, and demographic needs (Oliver & Howley, 1992). One of the most apparent and challenging changes is how local members of the community embrace newcomers. Ward (1994) posits that inhabitants of rural communities particularly must anticipate resistance to "…changes in culture because of perceptions that they are not changes for the better" (p. 40). Likewise, Wrigley (2000) comments on the lack of experience that rural communities have with "outsiders" especially those from other cultures and how "…this can lead to fear and misunderstanding when immigrants begin to settle in an isolated community" (p. 1). The unknown is often unsettling to members of a group when newcomers enter with different cultural backgrounds and values. Therefore, these fears are brought to schools, affecting all members of the educational system.

Conversely, Spears, Oliver, and Maes (1990) describe rural America as a *culture of small places* defining it as "a set of values and behaviors that reflect an environment in which individuals are noticed" (p. 1). In rural communities there are more social interactions, informal communication, value placed on generalists rather than specialists, and respect for local context (Nachtigal, 1982). "Differences are acknowledged and accepted as a necessary consequence of small size and limited resources" (Spears et al., 1990).

Although fear of the unknown can be problematic in small communities, positive aspects are prevalent as well. Some of these traits such as a strong sense of community, smaller class sizes, more positive student perceptions of school, and increased parent involvement are evident in the schools that inhabit rural areas (Boyd & Fitzgibbon, 1993; McLaughlin, Huberman,

Hawkins, & Hoffman, 1997; Spears et al., 1990).

Rural Schools

Rural schools and the communities they serve are powerfully connected. Many believe that the rural community would disappear if it were not for the rural school (Ward, 1994). As a result of demographic changes in rural areas, rural schools are both positively and negatively affected. According to Huang (1999), "Favorable changes in rural demographics and economic conditions both promise opportunities and raise questions about public programs, including rural schools" (p. 2).

First, there are many positive features related to rural schools. Boyd & Fitzgibbon (1993) describe some of these favorable aspects to include more personal attention for both teachers and students, absence of bureaucratic barriers, sense of community and family interdependence with the school, slower pace of living and working, more controlled environment for raising children, and smaller classes. Some research indicates that students in rural settings exude more positive feelings toward school and their commitment to being a part of the school environment (i.e., many participated in extracurricular activities) (McLaughlin et al., 1997).

Spears, Oliver, & Maes (1990) assert that in rural schools change *can* occur more easily, adult–child linkages are more visible, and school–community relationships are more natural. "Rural schools should take advantage of these strengths, working towards restructuring that may well be more easily accomplished than in a larger district" (Spears et al., 1990, p. v.).

Unfortunately, despite the many positive aspects surrounding rural schooling, there are numerous concerns (Shoho & Petrisky, 1996), especially when comparing rural education to urban. Spears, Oliver, & Maes (1990) present some of these problematic concerns by outlining, "Limited resources, models of schooling that are often more urban than rural in their design, an

uneven political playing field- all have combined to limit both the resources and flexibility of rural schools" (p. v). Overall, rural schools that experience a changing school demographic have difficulty responding to all students (Wrigley, 2000). Rural schools have struggled in this regard:

> Immigrants in rural areas have attained, on average, less education relative to urban immigrants. High school completion rates, for example, are lower among rural immigrants aged 25 and older than among their urban counterparts. And this gap seems to be widening: metro immigrants who have entered the country since 1980 report increasingly higher rates of school completion, whereas completion rates among non-metro immigrants remains low. (Huang, 1999)

Hence, the necessity of having access to resources for newly arriving language minority students and families is essential for student success (Spears et al., 1990; Wrigley, 2000). McLaughlin et al. (1997) reported similar discoveries: rural schools are not as financially stable, experience more poverty, and are isolated culturally, geographically, and economically; thus, there are higher levels of drop-outs and lower levels of students attending college. As a result of lack of funds, resources, and at times, geographic distance, rural schools of small size are unable to access some types of training or participate in particular programs as frequently compared to larger districts. Therefore, in an effort to educate students more effectively and efficiently, rural schools often seek assistance by entering into regional cooperatives so that one or more schools within reasonable proximity can combine their resources and funds to educate students. Additionally, the use of telecommunication is also popular for receiving in-house, economically friendly, professional development training for teachers and administrators (McLaughlin et al., 1997). Such is the case of the school that was the focus of my research.

In addition to having limited resources, teachers are often unprepared for the cultural differences that await them when they have Latino students in their classes (Brunn, 2002). Another concern is that many students of color live below the poverty line in rural areas (Dilworth & Brown, 2001; Huang, 1999). One report noted that 3.2 million children in rural

schools live in poverty, making it difficult for students to learn (Huang, 1999). Shoho and Petrisky (1996) pose that the idea that a small school is like a family where students receive more personalized attention is false. Instead, they argue that small schools are impersonalized and students have the potential of feeling isolated. Coupled with the large number of students who may be living in poverty, students who feel isolated would need teachers who have specialized training in meeting their needs.

Rural schools must be attentive to all of these concerns when devising effective strategies for educating all students. One intention of this research study is to reveal if the deeply held perceptions and beliefs of teachers in a small, rural school in this case were beneficial to Latino students' experiences.

Small Schools

Much akin to the aforementioned rural educational settings, small schools experience several of the challenges and possess many of the same positive attributes. Similarly, researchers have explored what might accelerate as well as inhibit diverse learners' successes in small schools (Gladden, 1998; Holland, 2002).

As a result of a growing number of schools with poor academics, lower attendance, and increases in school violence, concerns about school size have arisen across federal, state, and district levels; also disconcerting is whether or not the latter inhibits student achievement, particularly students of color (Holland, 2002). Although school size is not in itself the reason for school improvement, researchers would agree that small schools provide features that may add to student success that larger schools cannot. Compared to students attending larger schools, Gladden (1998) conveys that students labeled "at-risk" were more likely to have more course credits, higher standardized test scores, less course failures, and higher levels of educational

success.

Using interviews, focus groups, and observations, Holland (2002) delved into an intentional small school in Chicago to discover what contributed to the success of the school[1]. In her research, she outlines how small schools can sustain an engaging, inviting, and challenging environment for at-risk students. Key themes discovered that were prevalent amongst the faculty that aided in the development of themselves, their students, and the school were:

- *Philosophical Coherence* – Faculty members supported the mission and goals of the school. As a result of close proximity, teachers are enabled to adhere to those goals more easily, supporting and monitoring one another. Additionally, they allowed other persons in and outside of school to help in upholding that mission.
- *Collective Responsibility* – Shared commitment of the faculty for students' welfare was evident in their words and actions; parents were clearly partners in education.
- *Public Accountability* – Members of the school took responsibility for their actions and understood those actions affected the community.
- *Cooperative* – Faculty members often shared teaching and administrative duties and noted a collegial and democratic atmosphere. Teachers were also able to identify practices and strengths of others and felt as though they truly had a "voice" of sharing in the decision making of the school.

This finding parallels those of Byrk and Driscoll (1988) who reported that in small schools, teachers enjoy their work in a communal environment that fosters high staff morale; students from their study also reported that they perceived their teachers enjoying their work.

Similarly, other research indicates that the professional communities in small schools

were strong and included components to increase student achievement, possessed higher attendance and lower drop-out rates, and evidenced students with higher grades and lower course failures (Wasley et al., 2000). Also important is evidence that students within these small schools were exposed to more lessons about life because of the formed strong teacher-student and home-school relationships (Wasley et al., 2000; Wasley, 2001). Holland (2002) also indicates a more orderly, less violent environment exists in small schools.

However, some negative implications are discovered. For instance, Holland's (2002) findings suggest that decision making at times was difficult amongst staff because of the fear of 1) voicing concerns that might hurt other's feelings or 2) what others may think. Additionally, teachers felt more pressure to instill rigorous instruction and care for their students. Last there was concern for teacher burnout; multiple responsibilities and long hours were apparent. If teachers left, there was difficulty in finding replacements willing to buy-in to the system that had been created.

Ultimately, positive and negative features of the small school environment and its role in student success exist. In the next section, I examine more carefully the responses that schools have encountered while undergoing diversity changes.

Response to Demographic Change in Schools

Professional literature is saturated with advocacy for change in schools (Boyer, 1990; Brunn, 2002; Cochran-Smith, 2001; Huang, 1999; Levin, 1994; Providence Dropout Prevention Collabortive, 1994; Ward, 1994). Levin (1994) advocates, "The call for schools to adapt is strong, if not very united;" (p. 3) however, ". . . many think that schools are not changing enough" (p.4). Research indicates that schools are changing, but little work reflects whether or not schools *understand* the change or *how* to face difficulties that await them (Levin, 1994).

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high school defined as a small school in this study was comprised of 400 students or less.

Social scientists point out that human diversity is continually shaped through processes of mutual influence and accommodation (Mercado, 2001). These processes are evidenced for human adaptability, "… the infinite potential that human beings have to adapt to people and circumstances in their environment, under the best and worst circumstances" (Mercado, 2001, p. 668). There is an underlying assumption that organizational change occurs in response to an *external* demand (Levin, 1994; Warriner, 1984). There are many problems regarding change in school systems that Levin (1994) outlines:

1) *Difficulty in distinguishing between environment and organization*. It is unclear were boundaries should be drawn for an organization. For instance, parents, community groups, teacher unions -- are these part of the school system or environment?
2) *Lack of evidence that organizations have single environments* (i.e., political versus resource environments). Different players within the environment may see their roles differently.
3) *Idea of successful adaptation to change is troublesome*. In other words, what does it mean for schools to successfully adapt to a changing world? What does this look like?

Levin (1994) describes the emphasis in the literature regarding the role of human action in overcoming external change. For example, the increase in diverse school populations or the rise of computer use in teaching and learning has externally affected schools dramatically. Secondly, there are limits to the capacity of humans and organizations to adapt. Sometimes the environment is so volatile that people in organizations are capable of only marginal changes, and at times, that is not sufficient to assure success. Equally controversial in the debate is how organizations understand and respond to their environments (Levin, 1994).

Oliver and Howley (1992) express that rural schools attend to a full range of educational,

personal, and professional needs in their communities, as well as to economic, technological, and demographic changes. Levin (1994) adds that these external pressures often are the real catalysts for change in schools. Incidentally, the external pressures may hinder a school's response to its diverse student and faculty populations. Brunn (2000) urges that the response schools make to shifting linguistic, political and instructional issues and changing demographics is critical to the development of their students, faculty members, and the people of the communities they serve.

Rural communities and schools are beginning to recognize the need to look outside, rather than only within, for answers to questions about human meaning and purpose (Oliver & Howley, 1992). Brunn (2000) suggests that when school demographics shift, the challenge is to include as many groups as possible in decision-making to reduce marginalizing either the clients or providers. The clients, our students, possess cultural characteristics that the providers, our teachers, must consider when approaching their classrooms and interacting with students from diverse backgrounds. Therefore, other players such as community members and parents should be integrated into the process of sustaining positive change. Berg-Tilton, DePauw, and Herrmann (1996) support this notion by stating, "To ensure student success in schools and in their future careers, the schools must restructure to create equity between themselves and the community" (p. 6).

Evidence suggests that schools are not equipped to respond adequately to these changes. Levin (1994) expresses his concerns:

> ...there is relatively little empirical work on the questions of how schools understand and respond to the changes they face. The exhortations to schools to change are not matched by the research on how schools actually try to cope with their environments. Do schools understand and accept the pressures on them? If not, why no? If so, are schools unwilling to change or unable to do so, or are the critics misunderstanding the reality of the institutions? (p. 2)

A lack of research exists concerning small, rural schools and their faculty's response to

diversity. More research should be conducted addressing schools' understanding of the changes they are experiencing and the changes that they will ultimately make. This study will help unveil the realities of teachers' perceptions of how they understand change in their small, rural school and how they are responding to the educational milieu. The following research literature reports what happens in schools that face changes in demographics.

Existing research

Demographic change has a major affect on schools. Several studies analyze the practices, programs, and intervention strategies adopted by schools experiencing such change (Brunn, 2000; Berg-Tilton, DePauw, & Herrmann, 1996; Spears et al., 1990).

For instance, Brunn (2000) conducted a study in a rural Illinois school district that examined how the district formulated an effective instructional program for recently arriving Spanish-speaking students. After the town's aggressive recruitment of migrant workers, the number of Latino students rose in local schools dramatically. Consequently, the school's faculty members were unprepared for this change, which resulted in animosity toward the new student population. Interviews of teachers ". . . investigated educators' beliefs and attitudes that would function to separate or integrate student ethnic groups, and identified practices that promoted social inclusion" (Brunn, 2002). Like Brunn (2000), the ensuing research employs interviews of staff members to discern their attitudes and perceptions regarding their Latino student population so that their school may better serve their diverse populations both educationally and socially.

Similarly, changes in rural education spawned a two-year study conducted by the Ford Western Taskforce. Spears et al. (1994) examined the needs of rural schools and how they defined and worked toward change. Change and diversity provided the framework, summarizing how rural schools adapt to ethnic diversity and respond to the social and economic changes in

their communities.

After reviewing their research data, Berg-Tilton et al. (1996) found that an Illinois school's negative school climate and poor peer interaction may have been caused by students' inadequate development of social skills, lack of parental involvement, socioeconomic status, and number of troubled families. However, they also found that an underlying factor might have been the school's response to the demographic changes in the area. Interventions implemented to instill a more positive school environment included: 1) creation of a plan for a positive school climate, 2) social skills development program, and 3) school wide program to increase unity, improve student relationships, and raise multicultural awareness.

The aforementioned studies were catalysts for this study, which examined a small, rural school's faculty members' responses to the steadily increasing Latino student population including their perceptions and attitudes toward their students. Additionally, data were collected in order to capture the teachers' and administrator's beliefs as to what should transpire to address the needs and strengths of diverse learners.

Latino Student Experiences in School

The Providence Dropout Prevention Collaborative (2008) asserts, "…the Hispanic population is, in itself, multicultural" and that "there is no single country that defines the 'Hispanic' culture," using the term Hispanic "to group people from many diverse countries and regions where Spanish is the main language" (p.6). According to Fry and Gonzales (2008), sixty-nine percent of Latino students are of Mexican origin, followed by Puerto Rican (9%), Dominican (3%), Salvadoran (3%), and Cuban (2%). Additionally, about 72% of the nation's 10.8 million children (about 20% of overall school-aged population) who speak a language other than English at home are Latino; higher percentages of Spanish speakers have difficulty with the

English language (about 27%) compared to the remaining students who speak other Indo-European languages (Fry & Gonzales, 2008).

Achievement gap

The achievement gap on standardized achievement tests for Latino and African American students in the United States continues to widen. Fry and Gonzales (2008) cite from the Condition of Education that achievement scores of Latino students lag behind those of non-Latino white students. Many Latino students have below levels of basic proficiency in math and reading; unfortunately, gaps in reading and math are not as measurably different in 2007 compared to early 1990.

In Texas, the scores on Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) test for Latino students lag behind most other student groups (TEA, 2008a). In 2008, Latino student scores fall behind those of their white peers on all tests. In math and reading, the margin is small (5% and 9%); even more pronounced, in social studies, Latino students scores are 12 percentage points below those of white students (88% v. 96%) and in science, 21 percentage points lower (87% v. 66%). Both Asian and Native American students scored higher as well on all tests; only African American students' scores were lower than those of Latino students on all tests taken. On a positive note, the achievement gap is closing; Latino students' scores are higher on all tests completed in 2008 compared to 2007. In fact, Latino students' average score was highest in reading (87%) and social studies (88%); math (75%) and science (66%), however, both have great room for improvement.

Drop out rates

As a consequence of widening achievement gaps, student dropouts result. The dropout rate of adolescents throughout the nation, including those of Latino students, is disconcerting.

Under question in this regard are those methods by which dropouts are reported in the state and nation (Valenzuela, 1999). "National research shows that the conditions which lead Latino students to leave school are the same as those for dropouts in general: poor grades, being over age for their grade, and being absent frequently" (Providence Dropout Prevention Collaborative, 1994, p. 2). Incidentally, other indicators are cited a well: "limited English Proficiency, lack of parental encouragement, parents' lack of education, low self-esteem, and alienation from the school environment" (Providence Dropout Prevention Collaborative, 1994). The Providence Dropout Prevention Collaborative (1994) reflects that, overall, ". . .no researcher has yet been able to explain definitely why Latino youth, rich and poor, East and West, bilingual and monolingual, are so much more prone to dropping out than other youths" (p. 3).

Perceptions of school

Many Latino students report negative experiences while attending school. In 2007, 84% said that discrimination was a problem in schools (up from 75% in 2002) (Fry & Gonzales, 2008). In a study of Latino high school students, many reported that their schoolwork was inhibited because of several factors: desired courses unavailable; not feeling a part of the school; job taking too much time; inadequate teaching; poor study habits. Additionally, 5 –10% more Latino students than Caucasian reported that course difficulty, lack of help from teachers, health issues, and transportation problems also made school more challenging (Ascher, 1984).

Although some studies report Latino learners having significantly negative experiences while in school (Baron & Vasquez, 1990), many students, regardless of their experiences, seem to view schools satisfactorily. Nearly two-thirds in 2004 said they were satisfied with public education and, ironically, rated their local public school with an A or B, giving higher ratings compared to their African American or Caucasian peers (Fry & Gonzales, 2008). The Providence

Dropout Prevention Program (1994) noted several findings from their survey to assess Latino high school students' needs and perspectives. For instance, eighty-six percent "like" school and believe that learning English is important to school success. Several also felt that encouragement and advice from teachers and parents aid in school success; teachers who care about students was rated very important (Providence Prevention Program, 1994, p.3).

Additionally, findings from The Pew Latino Center, which conducts an annual survey of Latino adults, are relevant to this study. In 2008, 94 percent reported that education was either "extremely important" or "very important" (Fry & Gonzales, 2008). Tatum (1997) cites the work of Suarez-Orzoco and her study of *familiasm* or strong family orientation; she found that "achieving in school and at work were considered important by Latino teens because success would allow them to take care of family members" (p. 137).

The perspectives of students of color and their attitudes toward school is a significant factor in discerning how schools might positively respond to diverse learners. Many students often experience tension in maintaining their identity and fitting into a new community, feeling as if they must forget their ethnic culture and learn the "American way." Consequently, students of color struggle preserving their identity in American society (Berg-Tilton et al., 1996); this preservation of identity, the need to "fit in," can foster feelings of isolation and alienation. In a survey conducted by Shoho and Petrisky (1996) who investigated the perception of alienation in rural schools, they discovered that Latino students felt more *normless*, a term given to the feeling that one's value system is inconsistent with school norms, believing that others perceive you negatively.

Much literature reflects the importance of Latino student perspectives in schools and, while that is not the focus of this study, the views of Latino students as reported in the literature

are germane to this examination of the perceptions and attitudes of teachers, a phenomenon that is not as closely researched.

Response to Diverse Learners

Much of the current research literature reflects teachers' roles in diverse settings (Brunn, 2000; Cremier-Wilhelm & Karr-Kidwell, 1995; Delpit, 1995; Dilworth & Brown, 2001; Howard 1999; McNeil et al., 1996; Paley, 2000; Providence Dropout Prevention Program, 1994; Stevens et al., 2007). In the aforementioned paragraphs, evidence is cited of the increasing Latino student population throughout the nation and its affect on small, rural communities and schools. "Diversity is a fact of life in every classroom. Our classrooms are diverse in ethnic terms as well as backgrounds, learning styles, special needs, and economic levels" (Berg-Tilton et al., 1996). For teachers in our schools, the task of educating an increasingly diverse population can be overwhelming (McNeil et al., 1996) and teachers, especially in rural areas, are baffled at how to find solutions to adapt to this change (Wrigley, 2000). Four distinct themes transpired throughout the literature that teachers of diverse learners must direct their focus: self-reflection of personal biases, willingness to change for their students, consideration of other cultures, and attitudes toward students.

Self reflection

Before teachers can effectively respond to diverse student populations, Cochran-Smith (1995), Ross (1995), and Zambrano (2002), advise that teachers must first examine their own assumptions about different cultures and how their personal history may affect their beliefs. Determining any bias that may exist and noticing when personal judgments interfere is a crucial step in discovering what teachers convey to students through their own behavior (Berg-Tilton et al., 1996).

Likewise, Pang (1994) also contends that teachers begin the process of being sensitive to different cultural systems thus creating a more understanding and caring environment by investigating their own values and goals. She continues that teachers should actively participate in a diverse community to rethink misconceptions and effectively connect students' lives to the school curriculum. Educators need to evaluate their own cultural beliefs and ideologies to better teach diverse students. As McNeil et al. (1996) articulate that "we must view diversity as normal;" they continue, "diversity and differences are part of the natural order of things—they 'belong' to all of us" (p. 21).

Willingness to change

Cardenas (2004) posited the Theory of Incompatibilities which stresses that five interdependent characteristics (poverty, culture, language, mobility, and societal pressure) impact migrant education. "Schools must consider each characteristic in adapting education services and programs to the needs and strengths of Mexican American migrant children" (p. 243) Rather than requiring the population to adapt, schools must consider these characteristics in all facets of governance, curriculum, service programs, etc. According to Cardenas (2004), the most vital characteristic, societal perceptions, explain how schools and families perceive one another and how this interaction affects children's success. Cardenas (2004) employed a curriculum of identification, affirmation, and validation in all teaching, regardless of students' cultural, racial, or educational background.

In the past, the idea prevailed that families and students were responsible for change, not the schools or teachers. This notion absolved teachers from the responsibility of thinking critically of their teaching strategies for differing student populations (Trueba & Bartolome, 1997). Spears (1994) emphasizes the importance of teachers changing to meet the needs of

students. Quoting a former elementary principal:

> [We] started out thinking about what we needed to do for them -- the growing Latino population. Then we realized that we needed to change. We needed to value cultural differences that our students brought to school -- use these differences to build a more inclusive we. (p. 3)

Once teachers experienced this realization, extensive staff development emerged and the attitudes and perceptions of teachers altered resulting in a stronger desire to meet the needs of their Latino students (Spears, 1994).

Current thought advocates that change should culminate amongst teachers. Spears (1994) suggests a "bottoms up" approach to change, which should then spur the development of new programs and shaping of staff development.

Fortunately, now teachers are taking a more active role in diversifying the school environment in various ways. Spears et al. (1990) note that:

> …in an effort to better serve a diverse population, we are seeing support for diversifying educational practices: increased participation of teachers in curricular matters, emphasis on teaching methods of processing and applying information, and greater use of community resources. This also encourages educators to become more active in the process of change. (p. 2)

Considering culture

To effectively address the strengths and needs of diverse learners, their cultures must be considered (Berg-Tilton et al., 1996; Wrigley, 2000). Geneva Gay believes that teachers must be sensitive to different cultural systems and establish a knowledge base about different cultures. Doing so will create a culturally affirming and caring environment (Gay, 1993 as cited in Berg-Tilton et al., 1996). Additionally, Ladson-Billings (1994) emphasizes that teachers must realize that each student enters the classroom with valuable knowledge. Students should not be ". . . seen as empty vessels to be filled by all-knowing teachers. What they know is acknowledged, valued, and incorporated into the classroom" (p. 87). The latter reflects culturally responsive teaching

which will be elaborated later in the chapter.

Teacher attitudes

The attitudes of teachers towards race and culture are critical variables in the educational success of children of color as well as in the preparation of all students in a diverse society (Dilworth & Brown, 2001; Villegas & Luca, 2002). Trueba and Bartolome (1997) support this concept by affirming:

> The design, selection, and use of particular teaching methods arise from teachers' perceptions of the academic ability and worth of students. However, even the most pedagogically advanced strategies are ineffective in the hands of educators who believe that ethnic, racial, and linguistic minority students are at best culturally disadvantaged and in need of fixing, or, at worst, culturally or genetically inferior, and consequently beyond help. (pp. 3 - 4)

Hence, it is imperative to respond to negative perceptions teachers may develop of students of color and their families because as Paley (2000) renders, "…our behavior in the classroom becomes an important part of the 'hidden curriculum' " (p. xix).

> Teachers, rather than students, were 'culturally deprived' because they did not understand or value the cultural heritages of minority groups. Educational reform needs to begin by changing teacher attitudes about nonmainstream cultures and ethnic groups, and then developing skills for incorporating cultural diversity into classroom instruction. These changes would lead to improvement in student achievement. (Gay, 2000, p. 28)

This study examines teacher attitudes for this very reason: to gain a better understanding of teacher perspectives with the ultimate goal of improving. Learning is not only affected by curriculum and pedagogical strategies, but also by the ideologies, behaviors, and attitudes of teachers (Nieto, 1999, p. 1). In this research study, teachers were prompted to reflect upon their attitudes toward Latino students as well as their teaching practices and other methods that may affect diverse learners. In doing so, their assumptions and overt beliefs concerning the students they educate revealed care, empathy, and respect.

Understanding Racism v. Prejudice

One cannot study a school's primarily homogenous, white staff's responses to and views of their Latino population without a discussion of race and prejudice. Tatum (1997) reminds us that racism and prejudice are not to be used interchangeably, defining prejudice as "a preconceived judgment or opinion, usually based on limited information" (p.5) that is not a thing of the past. Alternatively, she distinguishes that racism is not "an expression of prejudice alone" but instead "a system involving cultural messages and institution policies and practices as well as the beliefs and actions of individuals" or, in other words, "prejudice plus power" (p. 7).

Many teachers today are oblivious to this strong terminology, believing that racism died with the Civil Rights movement. As a result, racism and other biases are often ignored, leading to a culture of educators who are not self-aware of their white privilege; this unawareness continues to propagate inequalities throughout the school environment (Nieto, 1999).

The information a person learns about others is often not generated from firsthand experience, but from secondhand experiences, such as the media—TV, movies, popular culture, books. Additionally, people learn from the unspoken (Tatum, 1997). "Stereotypes, omissions, and distortions all contribute to the development of prejudice" (Tatum, 1997, p. 5).

Unfortunately, in many schools, a pervasive notion is that once a multicultural curriculum is in place, racism dissipates (Nieto, 1999). Although establishing a high-quality multicultural curriculum and supporting culture within a school are intended to promote awareness and respect for all members of the school environment, racism can only truly subside when members possess the ability to self reflect on their position in the existing hierarchy of society, understanding that differences are existent. In other words, Nieto (1999) shares that if we do not want negative perceptions of people of color to permeate the walls of our educational institution, "If we want to

obliterate such images, we need to first recognize that they exist; to pretend that they do not is to whitewash history" (p. 21).

Tatum (1997) reminds us that prejudice is not our *fault,* but with a caveat, "To say that [prejudice] is not our fault does not relieve us of our responsibility, however" (p. 6). The intent of this research is to encourage staff members to self-reflect upon their views and attitudes of their Latino population, diving into their perceptions of how they have and will take responsibility of negating possible inherent prejudices.

Need for Conversations about Race

Many researchers emphasize the necessity of having serious conversations about race (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Tatum, 1997). Much like Delpit's (1995) *silenced dialogue*, Tatum (1997) wants to help others "move beyond fear, beyond anger, beyond denial to a new understanding of what racism is, how it impacts all of us, and ultimately what we can do about it" (p. ix). Discussions regarding race issues "means meaningful, productive dialogue to raise consciousness and lead to effective action and social change" (Tatum, 1997, p. 193).

The dilemma in schools regarding diversity is not just in instructional methodology, but also in communicating across culture and addressing issues of power- of whose voices get heard and those who do not in determining what is best for children of color. Both sides must listen; those with power must take the greatest responsibility for initiating the process (Delpit, 1995).

> There is a lot of silence about race in White communities, and as a consequence Whites tend to think of racial identity as something that other people have, not something that is salient for them. But when, for whatever reason, the silence is broken, a process of racial identity development for Whites begins to unfold. (Tatum, 1997, p. 94)

Delpit (1995) advocates that we must put our personal beliefs on hold, taking time to earnestly learn what it feels like to be someone else. She continues that you "must keep perspective that people are experts of their own lives" and that "…they can be the only authentic

chroniclers of their own experience" (Depit, 1995, p. 47). We may not understand their rationales, but we cannot disregard them (Delpit, 1995). "Teachers are in an ideal position to play this role, to attempt to get all of the issues on the table in order to initiate true dialogue" (Delpit, 1995, p. 47). Howard (1999) states it best: "Diversity is not a choice, but our responses to it certainly are" (p. 2).

Sonia Nieto contends that teachers are missing from conversations regarding teaching students of color and that:

> …it is particularly crucial for White teachers to be involved because they need to reflect on what it means to be teachers of African American, Latino, Asian, and American Indian students; they needed to consider what it means to be *both* White and multicultural and *both* White and anti-racist. (from Howard, 1999, p. xiii)

Like Delpit (1995) and Nieto (1999), Paley (2000) emphasizes the need for teachers to "explain themselves," yet they "seldom have the chance to do so" (p. xix). This research encourages educators to "explain themselves," promoting conversations about the school's response and their own personal feelings regarding the campus's Latino student population.

White Teachers

The following school under examination consists of a homogenous, Caucasian teaching and support staff. This study inspects faculty members' current response to diversity regarding their Latino student population and the attitudes and beliefs they hold toward them. This is important to recognize because "…Teachers' attitudes and behaviors toward students of different backgrounds can be significant factors on their learning" (Nieto, 1999, p. 42).

Unfortunately, Caucasian teachers find themselves in multicultural settings not knowing what to do. "Too often we expect White teachers to be what they have not learned to be, namely, multicultural competent people" (Howard, 1999, p.4). Ultimately, many teachers do not wish to damage their students and sincerely want to help, "…yet they are totally unable to perceive

those different from themselves except through their own culturally clouded vision" (Delpit, 1995, p. xiv). Educators have good intentions to negate discrimination; some are even aware of students' cultural differences. However, "...good intentions and awareness are not enough to bring about the changes needed in educational programs and procedures to prevent academic inequities among diverse students…Intention without action is insufficient" (Gay, 2000, p.13).

Chronicling his book from the eyes of a white man, Howard (1999) illustrates his experiences of rapid demographic growth in the Latino population within the school he taught. "White teachers [need] to recognize their complicity in creating and supporting the conditions in schools that lead to failure for so many students of color" (Nieto as cited in Howard, 1999, p. xiii) By upholding the status quo, looking at students through the same glasses, students' unique strengths and needs are stifled.

Howard (1999) emphasizes the need to understand Whiteness; we must undergo a personal transformation first before truly understanding issues of diversity (p. 4). "White educators who are willing to embark, both personally and professionally, on the river of diversity can begin to shift the flow of power away from oppression and toward greater inclusion and justice" (Howard, 1999, p. 82). Termed *La Tierra Transformativa,* Howard (1999) denotes this as the "…place of vision, healing and positive change" (p. 119).

Comparable to Howard's experiences, Paley (2000) reflects on her life as a white teacher of black children in an integrated school situated within a white, middle class neighborhood. Carefully examining her own belief system and culture, Paley identifies her blind spots and prejudices that are a result of her Jewish, middle class upbringing in white society. Very respectfully, she looks closely at the worlds of her students, unmasking how she can more effectively address their strengths and needs in the classroom, valuing their individual

differences. Paley (2000) poses the following questions as she chronicled her experiences: "Is this classroom in which I live a fair place for every child who enters? Does every child and family have an equal say in the worlds we invent?" (p. xv). At the beginning of her experiences, Paley (2000) recalls, "it was more comfortable to pretend the black child was white" (p. xvii). As a result, Paley (2000) was more inclined to avoid talking about her children's differences. Such experience is indicative of so many white teachers today who have tendencies to avoid the "color issue," believing the ideology that "we are all the same."

Paley's (2000) experience shaped her understanding of what delineates true sensitivity of other cultures and their backgrounds, realizing that issues of race can greatly inhibit students' learning. "Anything a child feels is different about himself which cannot be referred to spontaneously, casually, naturally, and uncritically by the teacher can become a cause of anxiety and an obstacle to learning" (Paley, 2000, p. xix).

> The challenge in teaching is to find a way of communicating to each child the idea that his of her special quality is understood, is valued, and can be talked about. It is not easy, because we are influenced by the fears and prejudices, apprehensions and expectations, which have become a carefully hidden part of every one of us. (Paley, 2000, p. xx)

Ignoring race and not coming to terms with the realities of our differences only exacerbates avoidance which ultimately devalues the students we teach. Tatum (1997) contends that white people are afraid of their own ignorance, hence, they are "…encouraged by their culture of silence to disconnect from their racial experiences" (Tatum, 1997, p. 201). As a result of this lack of understanding and disconnection, "Ignorance of people different from ourselves often breeds negative attitudes, anxiety, fears, and the seductive temptation to turn others into images of ourselves" (Gay, 2000, p. 23), while the idea of "sameness" breeds color blindness which is more thoroughly illustrated in the next section.

Colorblindness

Researchers emphasize that white teachers must not avoid seeing color resulting in "color-blindness" (Cochran-Smith, 1995; Gay, 2000; Howard, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Paley, 2000). Ignoring students' ethnicity and culture, regarding all students as "the same," should not be mistaken as educational equity (Cochran-Smith, 1995). Rejecting the "color blind" philosophy that some white teachers uphold, Nieto (1999) stresses that teachers must "see" the differences in their students. Similarly, Ladson-Billings (1994) declares, "If teachers pretend not to see the students' racial and ethnic differences, they really do not see the students at all and are limited in their ability to meet their educational needs" (p. 33).

Teachers claiming, "I don't see color" eventually leads to *dysconscious racism.* Unconscious of the fact that some children are privileged and others are not, teachers fail to challenge the status quo and accept the given situation as inevitable (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 31). Teachers are not racist; instead they are unconscious of the fact that certain students are privileged and others are disadvantaged. Therefore, teachers must understand that:

> Saying that we are aware of students' race and ethnic background is not the same as saying we treat student inequitably. The passion of equality in the American ethos has many teachers (and others) equating equality with sameness. (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p.33)

As illustrated in the aforementioned section, Paley's (2000) colorblindness resulted from being taught not to mention color around people of color while she was growing up. "…We showed respect by completely ignoring black people as black people" (p. 9). Akin to Paley's experiences, adults struggle and are embarrassed about talking about racial issues, worried about using the wrong words, breaking social taboos, and most importantly, worried about being seen as racist (Tatum, 1997). Tatum (1997) continues, "Adults, both white and of color, often hesitate to speak to children about racism for fear they will create problems where none exist, afraid they

will make 'colorblind' children unnecessarily color conscious" (p. xvi).

Howard (1999) agrees, describing a situation at a multicultural workshop were he met a kindergarten teacher who innocently declared with latent frustration that her "students come to me with the same stuff," and "I treat them all alike" (p. 25). Yet, by the end of the year, her white students seemed to be ahead of her black and Latino students. Howard (1999) contends, "There is so much that needs to be said about the notion that all children come to us with 'the same stuff.'...These [cultural] histories are not the same, yet they profoundly influence the educational process" (p. 25). Similarly, documenting comments from middle class educators, Delpit (1995) advises that educators must get away from thinking, "I want the *same* thing for everyone else's children as I want for mine" (p. 28). Howard (1999) further asserts that color blindness stems from the melting pot idea that everyone in our nation melts into one type of person. Additionally, "Color blindness grows from a dominance–oriented perspective;" ultimately, "'We are all the same' translates as 'We are all like me'" (Howard, 1999, p. 53).

Cultural blindness and assimilation

Similar to color blindness is cultural blindness which also inhibits students' of color abilities. Gay (2000) outlines five notions of cultural blindness:

1) Stems from idea that school has nothing to do with heritage and culture.
2) Few teachers understand how teaching reflects European American cultural values, especially those of other ethnic groups.
3) Teachers believe that treating students differently because of their culture background is racial discrimination.
4) Belief that good teaching is transcendent—identical to all students for all situations.
5) Education is for assimilation into mainstream society. (p. 21)

Assimilation supports notions of sameness, maintaining the status quo, and promoting students of all cultures to acculturate into one particular mode, which is the culture of white, middle class. Therefore, "…pressures of assimilation have neutralized our connection to culture" (Howard, 1999, p. 23). Nieto (1999) further explains that "…although assimilation was previously considered a positive, albeit initially painful, process, it was viewed as a necessary passage and prerequisite for success in school and society" and adds "that by doing away with student differences, assimilation leads to *more* equality" (p. 33). However, Nieto (1999) then counters, "…the pressure that schools place on students to assimilate is itself an example of educational inequality" which can eventually lead to *deculturalization* (Boateng, 1990 from Nieto, 1999, p. 34*)*. This process were "individuals are forcibly deprived of their culture… can result in the failure to acknowledge the important role that culture may have in students' values and behavior, and consequently in their learning" (p. 34).

Overcoming the deficit syndrome with student strengths

Currently, many students are negatively labeled with markers that propose that they lack ability. Those outside the dominant culture are marked as a minority; students of color also fall into categories as being "at risk" or a member of "marginalized groups." All exude a negative connotation that Gay (2000) describes as the *deficit syndrome*—"educators attributing school failure to what students of color don't have and can't do" (p. 23). Tatum (1997) agrees, stating, "The language we use to categorize one another racially is imperfect" (p.17) evidenced by the continuing Census debate. "The original creation of racial categories was in the service of oppression," therefore, "…to continue to use them is to continue that oppression" (Tatum, 1997, p.17).

Assimilative practices are criticized for upholding the melting pot idea, disregarding the

reality of the nation's diversity. Rong and Preislle (2009) assert that "assimilation has come under attack for overemphasizing the importance of the national society while failing to recognize the strengths and optimism within the immigrant communities" (p. 14). Whereas pluralism poses that diversity enriches the nation's heritage, assimilation rejects "…maintaining the native language and cultural values..." of diverse populations (Rong & Preissle, 2009, p.15). Additionally, Rong and Preissle (2009) promote an "additive model" in contrast to the subtractive model, therefore:

> The additive model suggests that some values and orientations of immigrant cultures, plus rapid and full cultural assimilation into the mainstream U.S. youth popular culture, including its distractions and cultural dissonance, might work against educational attainment. (Rong & Preissle, 2009, p. 249)

Cardenas's (2004) discussions of migrant families focuses on the positive assets students bring to school stressing that future paradigms must be *needs responsive*. "Schools have not made sufficient strides in adapting processes and instruction to the needs and assets of children…" (p. 3); teachers must consciously value students' assets rather than deficits. Cardenas (2004) used curriculum of identification, affirmation, and validation in all teaching, regardless of students' cultural, racial, or educational background.

Like Cardenas, Ladson-Billings (1994) emphasizes valuing student strengths. She cites research of African American scholars that examined cultural strengths of African American students and the way teachers use these strengths to enhance their achievement socially and academically. She promotes the use of socially responsive teaching methods "…that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using culturally referents to impart knowledge, skills and attitudes" (p. 18). According to Ladson-Billings, differences in students must not be perceived by educators as liabilities, but instead embraced as assets. These positive implications of culturally responsive teaching are highlighted in the next section.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Culturally responsive teaching is the antithesis of assimilation (Ladson-Billings, 1994) and necessitates not only examining students' needs, but their strengths as well. Gay (2000) emphasizes that "…culture is at the heart of all we do in the name of education…" describing cultural responsive teaching as centering "classroom instruction in *multiethnic cultural frames of reference* " (p. xix). Cultural diversity is a strength; if education is devoted to teaching the whole child, then this comprehensive focus should be evident throughout.

Ladson-Billings (1994) describes culturally responsive teachers as those "who practice culturally responsive methods and can be identified by the way they see themselves and others" and that "they see their teaching as an art rather than as a technical skill" all the while believing "that all of their students can succeed rather than that failure is inevitable for some" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 25). In addition, teacher "relationships with students are fluid and equitable and extend beyond the classroom…demonstrate[ing] a connectedness…and … encourage[ing] a community of learners… They view the content of the curriculum critically and are passionate about it" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 25).

Citing the work of Mohatt and Erickson who investigated classroom interactions between white and Native American teachers and their Native American students, Ladson –Billings (1994) presents that teachers were most successful in communicating with student by using an international style. This culturally congruent style meant that "teachers altered their speech patterns, communication styles, and participation structures to resemble more closely those of the students' own culture" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 16).

Gay (2000) shares these attributes of culturally responsive teachers:

- Acknowledges the legitimacy of cultural heritages of different ethnic groups

- Builds bridges of meaningfulness between home and school experiences
- Uses a variety of instructional strategies that connect to different learning styles
- Teaches students to know and praise one another's cultural heritages
- Incorporates multicultural content in all subjects throughout school (p. 29).

Similarly, Villegas and Luca (2002) contend that culturally responsive teachers are socio-culturally conscious, have affirming views of students from diverse backgrounds, and see themselves as agents of change within the school. Additionally, they know the lives of their students and understand how they construct knowledge, promoting that construction and designing instruction that builds on students' funds of knowledge (Moll, Neff, Amanti, & Gonzalez, 2001).

The notion of culturally responsive teaching is complex and involves more than respecting other's backgrounds. Culturally responsive teachers must take responsibility for diverse learners' educational experiences and play an active role in the school promoting the goal of equity.

Agency and the Role of the Teacher

Culturally responsive teachers not only enhance their classroom instruction with practices that empower students of color, they also challenge the system that inhibits their students as well (Cochran-Smith, 1995). Ladson-Billings (1994) describes culturally responsive teaching as "questioning (and preparing students to question) the structural inequality, the racism, and the injustice that exist in society;" teachers must be "…critical of the way that the school system treats employees, students, parents, and activists in the community" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 128). These efforts must not be just words; therefore, words must turn into "action by challenging the system" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 128).

Additionally, culturally responsive practice means working with colleagues supportively, challenging policies and practices within and outside the school to promote equity and justice (Nieto, 1999). In other words, as Cochran-Smith articulates, "…the system need teachers who regard teaching as a political activity and embrace social change as part of the job…" (p. 494). DeStigter (2001) describes such an educator as a "citizen teacher" who:

> …is interested not only in how the opportunities to participate in such deliberations depend on rational discourse and the influences of power and authority, but also in how the equitable distribution of such authority relates in part on local, affective relations among diverse people. (p. 13)

In addition, "…a citizen teacher is a person invigorated by hope, a person who believes and acts on the notions that democratic education can further social justice and the release of human potential" (DeStigter, 2001, p. 13).

In this study, teachers were given the opportunity to share their thoughts and opinions about the educational system they currently reside. Likewise, they were encouraged to challenge its practices and question its effectiveness.

Lack of Teacher Diversity

Although the number of students of color is increasing in our schools, the number of teachers of color is not (Stevens et al., 2007). In fact, teachers of color are dwindling (Ladson-Billings, 1994) and represent only about 10% of the teaching population (Delpit, 1995). Nieto (1999) claims that teachers of color are "deplorably underrepresented in schools" and that out of 2.3 million teachers, 10% are "minority" (p. 31). Spears et al. (1990) emphasize that:

> The staff of a school can be a powerful factor in shaping the environment and circumstances under which education takes place. Staff serves as role models for students, affecting students' values, attitudes, career choices, and self-concept…. Consequently, as schools strive to create an environment for students that is sensitive and responsive to multicultural issues, they must be concerned with the ethnic composition of the staff. (p. 45)

Rural schools are challenged by the absence of a pool of certified teachers (Spears et al., 1990), especially the active recruitment of ethnically diverse teachers (Wrigley, 2000). Currently, fewer than 13% of public school teachers are derived from minority/under represented groups (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1999). Stevens et al. (2007) states, " . . . significant changes in the diversification of public school teachers do not appear to be occurring in a timely manner, and many Latino students are being taught by predominantly White educators" (p. 56).

In fact, there is also a decline in teachers of color in teacher preparation programs. The reason for the decline is: 1) number of college bound students from ethnic groups 2) widening of other professional opportunities 3) increase of competency exams 4) lack of prestige associated with teaching 5) low salaries and, 6) working conditions (Delpit, 1995, p. 105-106). This harsh reality is all the more troubling because students of color bring rich experiences to the educational milieu that their white peers cannot (Sleeter, 2001).

Teachers of color have opportunities to affect students in ways that white teachers cannot. Most have experienced inequality as teachers and some even *marginalization.* Teachers of color can relate to students differently as well; for instance, teachers of color are usually familiar with linguistic codes used by students and may be bicultural or bilingual (Nieto, 1999). However, teachers of color are not necessarily more sensitive toward or more educated about teaching students of color; they must be educated about students of other backgrounds as well. The climate of school can change dramatically if there is a diversified teaching staff (Nieto, 1999). Small, rural schools, simply, need more teachers of color.

Lack of Knowledge and Preparation

Delpit (1995) articulates, "There can be no doubt that issues of diversity form the crux of

what may be one of the biggest challenges yet to face those of us whose business it is to educate teachers" (p. 105). If teachers are to enter their classrooms equipped with the social, academic, and cultural tools needed to meet the strengths and needs of students of color, they must be presented with the tools to do so (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 1999). In addition, teachers often approach their classrooms from their teacher preparation experiences with little education in the arena of diversity. Once employed in schools with diverse populations, ongoing professional development is direly needed. Cochran-Smith (1995) proposes that "…experienced teachers, and teacher educators like to work together in communities of learners- to explore and reconsider their own assumptions, understand the values and practices of families and cultures that are different from their own, and construct pedagogy that takes these into account in locally appropriate and culturally sensitive ways" (p. 495). "Clearly, preparing teachers to teach children of diverse racial, ethnic, social class, and language backgrounds is a pressing issue in teacher education today…" (Villegas & Luca, 2002, p. 20). Let us look more closely at these two areas of preparing teachers for diverse learners: teacher preparation programs and ongoing professional development.

Teacher preparation programs

Teacher preparation programs must confront the challenge of educating predominantly white future teachers to meet the needs of students from very unfamiliar, diverse backgrounds. Numerous researchers focus on addressing the lack of knowledge and attitudes of white pre-service students (Sleeter, 2001; Villegas & Luca, 2002). "Preparing students for a culturally diverse society is one of the most challenging endeavors in education today" (Berg-Tilton et al., 1996). Most teachers have had little or no training in bilingual/bi-cultural education or in English as a second language teaching methods (Hamayan, 1990). Others have received very

little training in diversity, and because diversity classes may be optional, some pre-service teachers may have received none (Villegas & Luca, 2002). Boyer (1990) stresses the importance of restructuring teacher education so as to "prepare American teachers so that they embrace a multicultural focus throughout preparation as well as delivery" (p. 65). With that in mind, Cochran-Smith (2004) poses the question, what should be the outcome of teacher preparation programs?

Cochran-Smith (1991) urges pre-service teaching programs to instruct their students to *teach against the grain,* a notion that requires prospective teachers "…to know from the start they are part of a larger struggle and they have a responsibility to reform, not just replicate, standard school practices" (p. 280). Cochran-Smith introduces two concepts, *critical dissonance* and *collaborative resonance,* as two approaches to teaching against the grain. Critical dissonance encourages pre-service teachers to look more carefully at issues of race, class, and power, questioning more critically the implications of their current educational experience at the college level. Collaborative resonance requires student teachers to link their school-based and university-based experiences so that they may connect theory and practice while critiquing the resources necessary to sufficiently function (Cochran-Smith, 1991)

Later, Cochran-Smith (1995) proposes that once pre-service teachers question their own assumptions about teaching, they are able to develop these views: 1) reconsidering personal knowledge and experience, 2) locating teaching within the culture of the school and the community, 3) analyzing children's learning opportunities, 4) understanding children's understanding and 5) constructing reconstructionist pedagogy (p. 500). Similarly, Sleeter (2001) explains that to address the nation's cultural gap between teachers and their students, two actions must occur: 1) encourage more diversity in the teaching profession and 2) instruct white teachers

on multicultural practice, dissuading them from negative attitudes they may perceive. To maintain the status quo in pre-service education is to only enable the problem. Therefore, Howard (1999) contends, "If we do not face dominance, we may be predisposed to perpetuate it" (p. 26).

Continuing professional development

Professional development is an essential element in contemporary schools. Boyd and Fitzgibbon (1993) emphasize that "professional development and training includes teaching, reviewing, and clarifying the knowledge and skills necessary for implementing change" which "goes hand in hand with planning and providing resources." They continue, "Skill building and professional growth are, in fact, change" (p. 4). School superintendents interviewed in the study all emphasized the need for professional development and training as a crucial element when implementing change in schools (Boyd & Fitzgibbon, 1993). Dilworth and Brown (2001) continue to stress the importance of ongoing teacher education:

> The challenge for today's teachers and to those who work to educate them to improve their practice is to craft a safe haven in schools for such teaching and learning to occur. This sanctuary ought to reflect all that is good in the society at large and, at the same time, ought to give balanced attention and sense to issues, theories, and themes that seemingly counter them. This is more difficult than we might expect. (p. 658)

Teachers may come to their practice with the idea that all children can learn; however, it is difficult for some to fully grasp culturally responsive practices, hampered by preconceived notions attributed to upbringing and environment (Dilworth & Brown, 2001). Schools should promote professional development that provides teachers with confidence, resources, and motivation for responding to all learners' differing needs and sustained change (Spears et al. 1990).

Instructional Strategies

Effective instructional programs and strategies that target diverse learners are highlighted in the next section. Cochran-Smith (1995) reminds us that:

> …there are no universal strategies for teaching about cultural diversity or for teaching children who are culturally and linguistically different from one another, from their teachers, or from the 'majority' students for whom instructional materials and school expectations are tailored and whose best interests are served by continuation of the current situation. (p. 494)

However, research suggests that there are programs, such as Sheltered Observation Protocol and Newcomer's Program that are currently implemented in schools and districts that have potential to positively affect educational outcomes.

Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol

Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) is a cotemporary learning model devised to provide teachers with a "well-articulated practical model of sheltered instruction" (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008). The model is based on research-based practices and knowledge promoting learning for all students, especially English language learners. Perceived as an "umbrella" under which other effective instructional programs reside, its intent is to bring together sound practices so that they may be used coherently within the school context. Although SIOP seems to include good teaching practices in one formal model, the purposeful teaching strategies that comprise SIOP supports the language necessary for ELLs to understand content. The SIOP model is comprised of thirty features organized into eight of the following components: preparation, building background, comprehensible input, strategies, interaction, practice, lesson delivery, and assessment (Echevarria et al., 2008).

SIOPS's ultimate intent is to provide accessibility to grade-level content for English language learners while improving their proficiency in English. "Teachers scaffold instruction to

aid student comprehension of content topics and objectives by adjusting their speech and instructional tasks and by providing appropriate background information and experiences" (Echevarria et al., 2008). Many of SIOP's individual teaching strategies are commonly seen in effective classrooms; however, when practiced together, these components can greatly enhance the learning environment of ELLs as well as other struggling learners.

Newcomer's Program

In 1990-1991, in response to an increasing non-English speaking population, Austin Independent School district received a grant to serve their limited English high school students in a Newcomer's Program. *Newcomers* are defined as "a student who has been in the United States for one year or less" (Rumbaut, 1991, p.3). Many of the students had previously received limited schooling and some were illiterate. The program was designed to address the needs of new students and to improve their English skills by providing small classes, intensive English instruction, physical education, and content area classes. The goal was for students to transfer into a regular ESL program at the end of the year, better equipped with the English language so that they could be more successful in core subjects. The results of the study yielded students who attended school more often, received higher grades, earned more course credits, and had a lower drop out rate compared to the comparison group. Importantly, much akin to my ensuing research, interviews promoted teachers to share their opinions, experiences, and ideas regarding the program. In the end, "the most important issue to emerge from the staff interviews was the role of the teacher, who is considered to be key to the success of the program" (Rumbaut, 1991). Teachers and students involved with the program had generally very high opinions of its success.

Lack of Teacher Perspectives

Throughout the aforementioned text, much has been highlighted regarding increases in

student diversity, schools and teachers responding to diverse learners and change, as well as the need for conversations, training, and programs that may address the challenges in today's classrooms. "Educators are keenly aware that schools exist in a world that is changing rapidly in many ways, and that these changes have important consequences for children and for their education" (Levin, 1994).

Unfortunately, teachers' perspectives are often missing in research regarding diversity in schools. Brunn (2000) notes that one piece missing from diverse learner discussions is "the informed perspectives of the affected parties, mainly the teachers" (p. 2). Yet, as Paley (2000) emphasizes, teachers need to "explain themselves," although they "seldom have the chance to do so" (p. xix). Similarly, Nieto contends that teachers are missing from conversations regarding teaching students of color:

> …it is particularly crucial for White teachers to be involved because they needed to reflect on what it means to be teachers of African American, Latino, Asian, and American Indian students; they needed to consider what it means to be *both* White and multicultural and *both* White and anti-racist. (from Howard, 1999, p. xiii)

Therefore, it is imperative that examinations of the perspectives of teachers be a part of the conversations so that educators may be informed about how to approach the diverse contexts of contemporary schools. This research study should aid in filling the gaps regarding the lack of teacher perspectives in the research literature.

Conclusion

In this review of literature, the historical influx of Latino students throughout the nation was examined. More specifically, attention was given to the effects of this increase in rural communities and small schools. While teachers are faced with great challenges when working with Latino youth, the research suggests that many are unprepared to meet these needs. Teacher attitudes and perceptions are critical components in the successful education of Latino students.

Much of the research contends that teachers must be included in the change process as schools begin to address changing demographics. Unearthing teachers' perceptions and attitudes may yield viable information in the creation of professional development and programs that address the needs of the diverse populations they teach. In the next section, the methodology employed for this study is discussed.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Diversity is not a choice, but our responses to it clearly are (Howard, 1999, p. 2).

In chapter two, the review of the literature frames the context of this study, examining closely demographic change in communities and schools, teachers' responses to diverse learners, as well as their roles, beliefs, and training. The purpose of this study is to reveal a small, rural school's response to diversity, closely examining teachers' perceptions and attitudes as they experience a steadily increasing Latino student population. This chapter outlines the research methods that will allow me to best conduct my research. The following research questions are addressed:

1. How does a small, rural high school respond to a changing demographic, particularly in the Latino student population?
2. What are the faculty members' perceptions, views, and attitudes regarding the high school's Latino student population?

This chapter presents a conceptual framework and explanation of qualitative case study design situated within the Interpretivist paradigm. Then, a description of the participants and setting is illustrated, as well as data collection and data analysis methods. Finally, the roles of validity and reliability are emphasized, ending the chapter with limitations and ethical considerations.

Conceptual Framework

Novice researchers must consider their philosophical orientation before conducting research (Merriam, 1998). What is a researcher's belief about the nature of reality, the nature of knowledge, and the production of knowledge? This question must be answered to help

researchers locate themselves philosophically. "Thus getting started on a research project begins with examining your own orientation to basic tenets about the nature of reality, the purpose of doing research, and the type of knowledge to be produced through your efforts" (Merriam, 1998). The philosophical location of a researcher's belief about the world that drives the research project is known as a *paradigm*. Mertens (1998) defines a paradigm as ". . . a way of looking at the world . . ." that is ". . . composed of certain philosophical assumptions that guide and direct thinking and action" (p. 6).

Over the years, researchers have challenged the historic idea that inquiry must be neutral. Instead, some of today's researchers posit that all research is interpretive (Stake, 1999) and is "guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p.13).

The Interpretivist paradigm, referred to by some as Constructivist (Mertens, 1998), aims for deep understanding (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Like the Positivist/Post-positivist paradigm, the Interpretivist's ontology is realist, but differs because of its multiple, socially constructed realties (Mertens, 1998). The epistemology reflects that knowledge is a social construction of reality and that there is an "interactive link between researcher and participants" (Mertens, 1998); we can only understand how particular individuals represent their reality symbolically via language. An important attribute of the Interpretivist paradigm is that researchers are not detached from their participants, but instead possess their own personal convictions, understandings, and conceptual orientations (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 8). Interpretivist methodologies (ethnography, case studies, observation, interviews, historical research) are of an emergent design, thus, participants help to structure the inquiry.

This research consists of studying how a small, rural school responds to their steadily

increasing Latino student population. The principal objective of this research is to try to *understand* participants' beliefs by interacting with them through interviews, and in tandem, reflecting in a researcher's journal and studying the documentation that reflects this response. Faculty members shared their constructed realities while I devised my own interpretations. The Interpretive paradigm embodies the need to better understand the environment under investigation, relying on interpretation of the data and detailed description of the experience so that others may understand.

Research Design: Qualitative

Qualitative in nature, this study employs a detailed depiction to show associations. Stake (1999) defines qualitative research as ". . . a broad approach to the study of social phenomenon" whose ". . . various genres are naturalistic and interpretive" and ". . . draw on multiple methods of inquiry" (p. 2). Qualitative research is richly descriptive (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yin, 2003) and the research questions (stated in aforementioned paragraph) guide the methodology. Merriam (2005) proposes five goals of qualitative research:

1) Understand meaning of events

2) Understand the particular context within which participants act

3) Identifying unanticipated phenomena

4) Understand the process by which events and actions take place

5) Develop causal explanations

Similarly, Rossman and Rallis (1998) suggest characteristics of qualitative research: "naturalistic; draws on multiple methods that respect the humanity of participants in the study; is emergent and evolving; and is interpretative" while the researchers "view social worlds as holistic or seamless; engage in systematic reflection on the roles of the researcher; are sensitive

to their personal biographies and how these shape the study; and rely on complex reasoning that moves dialectically between deduction and induction" (as cited from Marshall and Rossman, 1998, p. 2).

The researcher is the instrument (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merrriam, 1998; Rossman & Marshall, 1998), entering into the lives of participants, illustrating for the reader an empathetic understanding through description (Rossman & Marshall, 1998). In this study, my educational experience influences my role as the researcher and provides valuable insight in analyzing the data. Since I have worked in the district of the school under investigation for the last three years, I experienced from an insider's perspective some of the faculty response my research reveals. However, because of my administrative role in the district, I was especially cognizant of the relationship between the interviewees and myself. I realized that as a result of the administrator-teacher relationship, some staff members might be reluctant to be as candid with their responses. Developing a comfortable rapport with interviewees and trying to overcome any subjectivity I possessed was imperative.

Emphasis is placed on *understanding* in qualitative research. Stake (1999) supports that "qualitative researchers have pressed for understanding the complex interrelationships among all that exists" (p. 27), which contrasts from quantitative researchers who seek control explanations. The most distinctive characteristic of qualitative research is the emphasis on interpretation (Stake, 1999).

Data analysis in a qualitative study is an ongoing process that does not occur at the end of a study, but throughout the research (Mertens, 2005). Mertens (2005) states, "Qualitative data analysis has sometimes been portrayed as a somewhat mysterious process in which findings gradually 'emerge' from the data through some type of mystical relationship between the

researcher and the sources of data" (p. 421). In addition, instead of gathering all data before conducting analysis akin quantitative studies, the qualitative researcher may collect data and begin analyzing throughout the data collection process (Mertens, 2005).

Mertens (1998) describes that the data analysis inherent in qualitative research occurs throughout the data collection process and is not *rigid*; unlike quantitative studies, there is not a test of statistical significance. However, it is comprehensive and systematic. Additionally, accountability is apparent in data analysis via reflective activities (i.e., inquiry audit). The inductive data process begins with reading the data and then dividing it into smaller units; data segments are derived from the data. Then, a comparison is employed to 1) build and refine categories, 2) define conceptual similarities, 3) find negative evidence, and 4) discover patterns. Finally, as data analysis occurs, categories are flexible and modified. The analysis process is not mechanistic. Instead, emphasis is placed on ensuring that data reflects people's perceptions resulting in a descriptive picture, patterns or themes, or emerging theory (pp. 421- 422).

Limitations

Qualitative research also presents some limitations. Stake (1999) outlines three challenges qualitative researchers face:

> 1) developing a thorough, concise conceptual framework
>
> 2) planning a systematic and manageable design that is yet flexible
>
> 3) integrating all of these into a document that is convincing to the readers that the study can and will be done (p. 9).

In addition, limitations may include research that is slow and tedious to make contributions resulting in more time and money. Subjectivity may pose a problem where "new puzzles are produced more frequently than solutions to old one" (Mertens, 2005, p. 45). Also, ethical risks

were seriously considered as I conducted the research. These limitations and challenges are discussed more thoroughly later in the chapter.

Case Study

A case-study design best suits the needs of this research. “A case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved” (Merriam, 1998, p. 19). Yin’s (2003) technical definition of case study is an empirical inquiry that:

- “investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when
- the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 13).

In addition, the case study inquiry:

- "copes with the technically distinctive situation, in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result
- relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result
- benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis” (pp. 13 - 14).

Stake (1995) suggests that “the case is a specific, complex, functioning thing” that is “an integrated system” (p. 2). Therefore, “The parts do not have to be working well, the purpose may be irrational, but it is a system; thus “people and programs are clearly prospective cases” (Stake, 1999, p. 2). Hence, my study of how a school (complex, integrated system) responds to change typifies what a case entails within a case study. Yin (2003) continues that case studies contain five different applications: 1) *explain* presumed causal links in real-life interventions too complex for surveys or experimental strategies, 2) *describe* an intervention and the real-life

context in which it occurred, 3) *illustrate* certain topics within an evaluation, 4) *explore* situations where evaluated intervention does not have clear, single set of outcomes, and 5) *metaevaluation* - a study within a study (Stake, 1986 as cited in Yin, 2003).

For this research, a case-study approach is best for understanding a faculty's response to change. The school is a complex, functioning entity (case) and is comprised of an integrated system (Stake, 1995).

Limitations

For some researchers, case study research possesses several limitations. One of the greatest concerns pertains to the lack of rigor (Yin, 2003). In the past, case study researchers have not followed systematic procedures, produced sloppy work, or have allowed bias to influence their findings (Yin, 2003). "Both reader of the case studies and the authors themselves need to be aware of biases that can affect the final product" (Merriam, 1998, p. 42).

Additionally, little basis for scientific generalizations yields another concern (Yin, 2003; Merriam, 1998). Questions arise if the findings are generalized where, in fact, they are only a slice of the whole (Merriam, 1998). One cannot generalize from a single case. Last, case studies are accused of taking too long, resulting in long, lengthy narrative which can be very costly (Yin, 2003; Merriam, 1998).

Reliability, validity, and generalizability are further concerns (Merriam, 1998). Subsequently in the chapter, I define these concepts in detail and explain how these issues were considered when conducting the research.

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis is the case, what is actually being studied related to the research questions (Yin, 2003) or ". . . the level of inquiry on which the study will focus" (Marshall &

Rossman, 1999, p. 34). In my study, the unit of analysis is a small, rural school's staff in central Texas that has steadily faced demographic change over the past several years. Various faculty members are purposely selected so that multiple facets of the staff are represented.

Rural communities and schools

The high school selected for my study is situated in a small, rural Texas community. The small town contains approximately 2, 253[2] inhabitants, perceived by many as a retirement community, thriving on the local tourist industry. People from all over the state stop there to enjoy its many bed and breakfast inns, boutiques, art galleries, and antique shops. In addition, agriculture is a large component of the economy in this area.

The high school is classified as a Texas 2A school with 397 students enrolled (TEA, 2008a). The student population is comprised of 79.1 Caucasian (314 students), 16.4% Latino (65 students), and 1% African American (4 students), 1.3% Native American (5 students) and 2.3% Asian/Pacific Islander (9 students) (TEA, 2008a).

Currently, the school thrives in UIL competitions. Last year, the school received the coveted LoneStar Cup obtaining the most points overall in the state for achievement in academic UIL, band, and athletics. The school prides itself on student success in and out of the classroom.

Despite the schools' scholastic successes, the high school's Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills scores do not reflect the high level of achievement apparent elsewhere in the school. The high school has been rated *Academically Acceptable* for the past three years. Both the Caucasian and Latino populations have scored high in reading; however, in math, Caucasian students have scored 86% the last two years, while Latino students have scored below 70% (TEA, 2008b). A fuller description of the TAKS results for the various student sub-groups

[2] As cited by the Central Texas Council of Governments. "River Town" was not incorporated until late 2000, therefore, this is an approximation until the 2010 Census.

is provided in the next chapter.

Student population growth

Strong growth in the nation's Latino student population is to continue for the upcoming decades (Fry & Gonzales, 2008). Texas is experiencing one of the fastest growing Latino student rates in the nation; more than 40% of public school students in Texas are Latino (Fry & Gonzales, 2003; U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). The school selected for this study has encountered steady growth over the last decade, experiencing an almost 6% growth in the last ten years. The subsequent chart demonstrates the growth in the Latino student population in this school. Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students are included as well. Since all but one LEP student in this high school are of Latino origin, it is important to note this specific growth also.

YEAR	Latino Students	Limited English Proficient
2007 - 08	16.4	3.8
2006 - 07	16.7	4.3
2005 - 06	17.1	4.5
2004 - 05	13.6	3.2
2003 - 04	11.0	1.7
2002 - 03	9.9	2.2
2001 - 02	10.3	.6
2000 - 01	12.8	.3
1999 - 00	11.3	.3
1998 - 99	10.6	.2

(Texas Education Agency AEIS Reports 1998 - 2008)

Faculty

The faculty at this high school is primarily ethnically homogenous. Of the fifty-two staff members, forty-seven are Caucasian, one is African American and four are Latino. This study utilizes a purposive sample; several teachers were particularly selected based on: 1) subject area, 2) ethnicity, 3) years of experience at Eagle High School 4) total teaching experience, and 5) gender. Choosing participants based on the aforementioned criteria was important so that the data encompassed a variety of staff members. In this study, eight faculty members were asked to participate. Later in the chapter, under *interviewee criteria,* more details of the staff members are presented; in Appendix B a thorough description is provided.

The high school employed for this study represents one type of small, rural school in Texas responding to diversity. Therefore, it serves as an appropriate unit of analysis for my research. The following explores the methods and procedures employed to collect data in the school.

Data Collection and Procedures

Before beginning this research, approval was obtained from different sources. First, the Institutional Review Board's consent was needed; after a meeting detailing the purpose of this study with the superintendent of the district and the high school principal, the district granted its written approval as well.

Considerable amounts of work are necessary in the data collection and analysis phases of a qualitative study (Mertens, 2005). The researcher as an instrument plays a particularly important role in the collection and analysis of data.

Researcher's role

Researchers must be good listeners and possess a profound respect and empathetic

understanding of others (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Additionally, the researcher must build trust, establish good relations, exude sensitivity of ethical issues, and exhibit awareness of reciprocity issues.

Rossman and Marshall (1994) stress, "The researcher must demonstrate awareness of the complex ethical issues in qualitative research and show that the research is both feasible and ethical" (p. 90). Stake (1999) agrees, emphasizing, "All researchers have great privilege and obligations: the privilege to pay attention to what they consider worthy of attention and the obligation to make conclusions drawn from those choices meaningful to colleagues and clients" (p. 49). Next, let us explore the methods employed to collect data in the high school: interviews, document review, and researcher's journal.

Interviews

In this research, interviews are the primary data collection method. Many researchers stress the usefulness of interviews in case study methodology (Merriam, 1998; Rossman & Marshall, 1999; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). Yin (2003) describes the use of interviews in case studies as "most important" and "essential" (p. 89). During the interview, the researcher possesses two jobs: 1) follow your own line of inquiry, and 2) ask questions in unbiased manner (Yin, 2003).

A *focus interview* is conducted during the research. Although conversational while posing somewhat open-ended questions, the researcher still follows a certain set of questions from case study protocol (Yin, 2003). This varies from an open-ended interview where the interviewer wishes the interviewee to share opinions and facts or from an interview that is more structured, much akin a formal survey (Yin, 2003).

Rossman and Marshall (1999) suggest having conversations rather than formal events

with predetermined response categories. In doing so, the researcher may uncover participants' thoughts while respecting how they frame the response. Participants' viewpoints unfold as they see it, not as the researcher perceives it. This is a crucial element in interviewing: conveying the attitude that participants' views are valuable (Rossman & Marshall, 1999).

Some limitations in interviewing are apparent. Stake (1995) asserts, "Getting a good interview is not so easy" (p. 64). First, interviewing involves personal interaction; thus, cooperation is of utmost importance. Interviewees may be unwilling or uncomfortable sharing with the interviewer, resulting in them not being completely candid in their responses (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Therefore, "Interviewers should have superb listening skills and be skillful at personal interaction, questioning framing, and gentle probing for elaboration" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 110). Also, because educators are *supposed* to naturally be supportive of all students, the interviewees may be tempted to voice "socially acceptable" responses. This reluctance to be honest can be a major hindrance on the interview and research findings.

Interviewee criteria

The aim of this research entails the examination of faculty members' attitudes and perceptions regarding the Latino student population within the school. To accurately gain an account from various staff members with differing ethnicities, genders, tenure, status, and subject area expertise, a purposeful sample was necessary. "Well developed sampling decisions are crucial for any study's soundness" (Marshall & Rossman, p. 72). As a result, the following faculty members are specially selected based on their position, ethnicity, and years experience at the high school in a purposeful sample: the principal, counselor, and six teachers (math, Spanish, ESL, and government/economics). Of the eight interviewees, six are female and two are male; the ethnic make-up consists of six Caucasian, one Latino, and one African American faculty

member. Two have fifteen to thirty-five years experience in the district, four have four to seven years, and the remaining two faculty members have only been with the high school one to two years. Three of the faculty members grew up in River Town, and all but one have eight or more years in education. A more detailed description of the interviewees is provided in Appendix B.

Participation in the study was strictly voluntary. Interviews were tape-recorded to help guarantee accuracy of interviewees' responses, then transcribed and analyzed by coding. Afterwards, I began to analyze the data and search for emerging themes.

Documentation

The research also utilized documentation, a valuable tool that can play an explicit role in reviewing the history and context of a specific setting in a case study (Yin, 2003). Marshall and Rossman (1999) describe collecting documentation as an unobtrusive data collection method that reflects the values and beliefs of participants involved in the setting (p. 116). In addition, the content analysis objective approach to obtaining quantitative description of various forms of communication can be conducted without disrupting the setting, viewed more recently as "a method for describing and interpreting the artifacts of a society or social group" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p.117). School board agendas, teacher correspondence, administrative reports, and other internal records are a smattering of documentation examples that enhance the research data.

Yin (2003) states, "For case studies, the more important use of documents is to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources." Therefore, in conjunction with the aforementioned methods employed, documentation aids in supporting evidence retrieved from other data sources. However, if evidence from documents is "contradictory rather that corroboratory," (Yin, 2003, p 87) the researcher recognizes the problem and inquires further into

the topic.

During the study, minutes of school board meetings, campus improvement plans, and other archival data that might reflect the school's demographic change and response to diversity were reviewed. Specifically, shifts in the documentation was sought that might reflect the school-level response to the growing Latino population.

Researcher's journal

A secondary data collecting method is the use of a researcher's journal. In this journal, I recorded thoughts and observations during the research process. "What is written down or mechanically recorded from a period of observation becomes the raw data from which a study's findings eventually emerge" (Merrriam, 1998, p. 104).

Merriam (1998) notes that an important component of field notes includes ". . . the researcher's feelings, reactions, hunches, initial interpretations and working hypotheses" (p. 106). Similar to a fieldwork journal used in ethnography, this journal included my ". . . ideas, fears, mistakes, confusion and reactions to the experience, and thoughts about the research methodology itself" (Merriam, 1998, p. 110). Referenced observations from the researcher's journal are internally cited in Chapter 4 as "RJ." Writing extensive notations from my observations of the interviews allowed me to experience a more participatory role in my research and helped to provide a richer description of my work.

Data Analysis

Marshall and Rossman (1999) define data analysis as ". . . the process for bringing order, structure and interpretation to the mass of collected data" (p. 150). Much of the research literature stresses the importance of data analysis as a simultaneous process with data collection in qualitative research (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). Merriam (1998)

describes data analysis as a "mysterious metamorphosis" that is "recursive" and "dynamic," where data is continuously emerging (p. 155). Once all data is collected, analysis is not complete. Data analysis becomes more intensive as the study progresses and once all the data are in (Merriam, 1998). As soon as data collection began, my search for meaning in the data originated.

After each interview, recordings are transcribed and coded. Merriam (1998) describes coding as ". . . assigning some sort of short-hand designation to various aspects of your data so that you can easily retrieve specific pieces of the data" (p.164). Simple or complex, coding can either identify a single theme or contain numerous incidents or quotes (Merriam, 1998). During initial coding, notes are organized, seeking themes in teacher response to change. Pseudonyms are assigned to participants during this initial phase. Codes are transferred to a spreadsheet, organized for identification of themes and patterns in a within-case display (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Afterwards, patterns and themes emerged from my participant interviews, documents, and researcher's journal.

Constant comparative model

My data analysis was built on the premise of constantly comparing (Merriam, 1998, p.159). Originating from Glaser and Strauss (1967), the constant comparative model is utilized for the research analysis. From my researcher's journal, interviews, and documents, I compared an incident with other incidents from data sets; this led to categories that were compared with one another and other instances. "Comparisons are constantly made within and between levels of conceptualization until a theory can be formulated" (Merriam, 1998, p. 159). After deriving categories of data, I am prepared to develop theory.

In closing, Yin (2003) outlines four principles to ensure that your analysis is of the

highest quality. Analysis should 1) show that you attended to *all evidence,* 2) address, if possible, *all major rival interpretations,* 3) address the *most significant aspect* of your case study, and 4) use the researcher's *prior expert knowledge* (p. 137).

Reliability and Validity

The researcher is the primary instrument in case study research; hence, validity and reliability of the study must be questioned. Yin (2003) describes that the development of a case study must have four conditions related to design quality: 1) construct validity, 2) internal validity, 3) external validity, and 4) reliability. In my study, I employ several techniques to ensure credibility of the research: triangulation of data, peer review, and member checks.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose four alternate constructs that better reflect the assumptions of the qualitative paradigm:

1) *Credibility* ensures that the subject is accurately identified and described.

2) *Transferabilit*y argues that findings can be applied and be useful again in a similar setting.

3) *Dependability* addresses the qualitative notion that the world is continuously constructed and changing; therefore, the researcher attempts to account for changes in the design.

4) *Confirmability* assures that the researcher is objective . . . asks the question, can this be confirmed by another?

Multiple methods and various data sources increase the dependability and consistency of my research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). Rich thick description helps readers *transfer* the research to other similar situations. Merriam (1998) suggests that readers must be able to conclude that their situation is similar to the situation so that findings may be transferred.

Triangulation, peer review, and member checks are three strategies that help strengthen my research.

Triangulation

Mertens (2005) defines triangulation as the "use of multiple methods and multiple data sources to support the strength of interpretations and conclusions in qualitative research" (p. 426) that "requires the convergence of multiple data sources from a variety of participants under a variety of conditions" (p. 422)**.** A major strength of case study is using multiple sources of evidence allowing the investigator to address a broader range of historical, attitudinal, and behavioral issues (Yin, 2003). Once triangulated, data facts are supported from more than one source of evidence. The data in this study were triangulated through interviews with multiple participants, member checking, document analysis, fact checking, and researcher's journal. Additionally, my own experiences as a previous administrator in the school assisted me in questioning and confirming.

Peer review

Asking colleagues to comment on findings as they emerge enhances a study's internal validity (Merriam, 1998). A researcher should engage with peers regarding their analysis, encouraging them to ask questions that will guide them in the study (Mertens, 1998). During my study, I asked experienced researchers to review the findings.

Member checks

Mertens (1998) coins member checks as ". . . the most important criteria in establishing credibility" (p. 182). Merriam (1998) continues, describing member checks as "taking data and tentative interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking if the results are plausible" (p. 204). Once I completed an interview and transcribed it, interviewees

reviewed its contents to clarify my general understandings and ensure internal validity. After the writing was examined, the interviewee had the opportunity to provide alternate language or interpretation (Yin, 1998).

Ethical Considerations

As I approached each interview, I informed faculty members verbally of their participant rights and of the overall purpose of the study. In addition, each agreed to sign a participant agreement form. I explained that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any point.

Emphasizing the importance of confidentiality is imperative. Participants were assured that the information they shared was strictly confidential; pseudonyms were assigned. Participant risks were extremely low, not warranting any harm. Reciprocity in this study was exhibited by offering informal feedback and will be made by helping participants find positive connections from the study and by making a series of recommendations that may lead to improved teacher training, knowledge, use of effective strategies, and initial or continued self reflection and conversations related to diversity.

Research Limitations

Although rich description of educators' perceptions and attitudes is inherent in this study, these findings are not meant to be representative of members of all small, rural schools. Within the report, my objective is to dispel any intentions for the reader to make generalizations about all small, rural, school-teacher perceptions. Instead, the aim of this report is to provide thorough insight into one particular school's response to changes in diversity.

In addition, my own personal bias may have influenced this study. Since I previously served as an administrator in the high school under investigation, I possess past experiences that

may have influenced my views of the teachers that I interviewed. Personal beliefs and preconceptions may have persuaded my data collection and reflections, and ultimately, the final writing that enters the pages of this study.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the appropriate methodologies have been described in this chapter were suited to conduct my research. Analyzing a school's response to demographic change was most adequately achieved by situating my research in an interpretive paradigm, employing qualitative methodologies in a case study. In chapter 4, the findings from the research are revealed; subsequently, in chapter five, concluding remarks and implications for further research are provided.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Intention without action is insufficient! (Gay, 2000).

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I elaborated the methods used to discover teacher response to demographics in a small, rural school. Employing the aforementioned methods, I have investigated the following research questions:

1. How does a small, rural high school respond to a changing demographic, particularly in the Latino student population?
2. What are the faculty members' perceptions, views, and attitudes regarding the high school's Latino student population?

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results of the research. First, an overview of the case is discussed, followed by each research question's findings.

Case Studied

Eagle High School,[3] a small, rural high school in Central Texas, was selected for analysis for this study. With the input of faculty as well as school documents and a researcher's journal,[4] this research uncovered the response of teachers and administrators in the school to increases in student diversity. Eagle High School is an ideal case for use in this study based on its size, location, students, and teachers.

In an effort to better comprehend the context of the school under examination, it was important to look closely at the high school's surrounding community and school district, as well as the student and staff composition, demographics, size, and student achievement.

[3] Pseudonym
[4] Observations from the researcher's journal will be internally cited as "RJ."

Surrounding Community

Eagle High School sits along the Interstate 35 corridor, situated in a town renowned for its bed and breakfast inns, cafes, boutiques, and antique shops. Tourists flock to River Town[1] to experience its many attractions and the tranquility of its small town atmosphere. Referred to by many as a "village," the population of River Town is roughly 2,253.[5] Local residents are comprised of many retirees, businesspersons, and individuals working in the larger towns nearby; additionally, local farmers and ranchers contribute to the town's economy.

The town's demographic consists of 92.4% Caucasian, .3 African American, .6% Native American, .6% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 8.7% Latino (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). Though primarily homogenous, over the years, the town has experienced a gradual increase in the Latino population. Many attributed the influx as a result of workers needed at the local bed and breakfasts, rock quarry, and other local industries. Kathy, the high school principal, reflected on the changes she has noticed since she moved to the community fifteen years ago:

> I started teaching in third grade, and between elementary and high school, we probably had three Latino families. I say three families—they probably were related in some sense, and I think they were all living in the same proximity together. But it was like one group that moved from Mexico to River Town together, and that was primarily the only Latino population at the time…. Since that time, I would say we're about a good fourth or third of our population is Latino…. We have not seen a huge influx all at one time. It's just been a slow increase because of the growth in River Town itself. There have also been businesses that have come into town like bed and breakfast businesses. They also have a rock quarry where many of those families work. They've opened a business, BB's Trailers[6], where they make trailers, and I think that they use many families for that type of work as well. So for the type of businesses that we have, I think it entices some of those families for work. (INT: PRIN: 9 - 20)

Danny, a veteran math teacher who has lived and worked in River Town his entire life, also reflected on what attracts Latino populations to the area:

[5] As cited by Central Texas Council of Governments, "River Town" was not incorporated until late 2000; therefore, a more accurate population count will be reflected in the 2010 Census
[6] Pseudonym

> Well, we have a higher percentage of Latino students now than we did 30 years ago, 20 years ago, even ten years ago. Why is that? Well, there's a high percentage of Latinos that have come into the United States, and so you would expect those increased numbers to be evident in pretty much every school, especially so here I guess because we have several businesses in the community that seem to be popular places for Latino men, uneducated Latino men to work. We have several large ranches. We have a very large landscaping business. We have a very large concrete construction business and maybe some others, too, but those are just some that I can think of right off the top of my head. So there are a lot of opportunities. There are a lot of job opportunities for anybody, but as I said, seems to be good fit. These businesses and the jobs that they provide seem to be a good fit for a lot of Latino men. (INT: MT: 13 - 23)

Both Kathy and Danny believe that the reason for the increase of Latino families is due to the industry and businesses in the area. Jenny, one of the only Latino teachers at Eagle High School, remembered when her family moved to the area:

> " . . . I know that in the early '70s when my parents moved to River Town,[7] we were maybe one of two Latino families. There were no other racial or culturally [different people]…. It was only us and another Latino family and it was all Anglo, the majority of the population, not all of it. So there was no African American, Asian, any other cultures or races, and just in the short window that I have been working for the district, I've noticed a huge increase in the Latino population. (INT: ST1: 12 - 16)

Thus, the community has experienced change in its demographics, and that change can also be reflected in the school system that inhabits it. A closer look at the school district affiliated with River Town revealed similar demographic change.

School District

The River Town school district has received an *Academically Recognized* rating from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) for its performance on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) test for the past several years and houses an elementary school, a middle school, a junior high school, and the high school. The student demographics of the district are 79.1 % Caucasian, 16.4 % Latino, 2.3% Asian/Pacific Islander, 1.3% Native American, and 1% African American; 19.9% of the district is economically disadvantaged (TEA, 2008a).

[7] Pseudonym

Teachers within the district indicated much support by their administration in terms of resources, curriculum, and personal needs. Results to the end of the year survey located in the District Annual Report found that teachers, overall, felt "very supported" (100% in curriculum, 99.5% in resources, and 97% personal needs). This has remained steady since 2003 (District Annual Report, 2006 - 07).

The River Town school district Mission Statement maintains:

> River Town ISD believes that all students can learn and can achieve mastery of basic grade-level skills. We believe that our district's purpose is to assure the highest possible level of academic performance and educational attainment for all of our students. We further believe that well-educated community is essential for economic health, quality of life, responsible families, and the continuation of a democratic government.

EAGLE HIGH SCHOOL

Size and Demographics

Eagle High School is classified as a Texas 2A high school (TEA, 2007 - 2008). The number of students at Eagle High School has steadily increased over the last twenty years with surges of growth intermittently. In 1990, the school's enrollment for 9^{th} - 12^{th} grades was 142. Five years later, the enrollment increased to 200 students, and in 2000, the number doubled from ten years earlier (302 students). By 2005, 376 students were enrolled at Eagle High School (District Annual Report, 2006 - 07). During the research phase of this study in the spring of 2008, 414 students were enrolled in EHS; as of September 1, 2009, Eagle High School experienced another major surge: 478 students. The demographics of Eagle High School is 79.1% Caucasian (314 students), 16.4% Latino (64 students), 1% African American (4 students), and 1.3% Native American (5 students), and 2.3% Asian Pacific (9 students) (TEA, 2008a).

Texas's Latino student population is one of the fastest growing in the nation; over 40% of public school children are of Latino origin (Fry & Gonzales, 2008). Only two other states,

Arizona and New Mexico, have numbers as high. Unsurprisingly, Eagle High School has experienced a gradual, steady increase in its Latino population over the past several years as well. In the last ten years, the Latino population has increased by 6%. The ESL population, particularly, has also grown. Compared to other campus groups, Eagle High School has a slightly larger ESL population (TEA, 2008c). The following chart outlines some of the increases in demographics throughout the high school compared to other district and state percentages.

ETHNIC DISTRIBUTION

2007- 08	*Count*	*Percent*	*Campus*	*District*	*State*
African American	4	1.0	3.0	.7	14.3
Latino	**65**	**16.4**	**15.7**	**17.4**	**47.2**
White	314	79.1	79.1	79.6	34.8
Limited Eng. Prof.	15	3.8	2.0	5.4	16.7
Eco. Disadvantaged	79	19.9	20.5	24.8	55.3
2006-07	*Count*	*Percent*	*Campus*	*District*	*State*
African American	4	1.0	2.6	1.0	14
Latino	**69**	**16.7**	**15.8**	**17.5**	**46.3**
White	332	80.2	79.9.	79.1	35.7
Limited Engl. Prof.	18	4.3	2.2	6.0	16.0
Eco. Disadvantaged	80	19.3	21.1	26.4	55.5
2005-06	*Count*	*Percent*	*Campus*	*District*	*State*
African American	7	1.7	4.6	1.6	14.7
Latino	**69**	**17.1**	**13.4**	**17.1**	**45.3**
White	318	78.7	78.7	79.0	36.5
Limited Eng. Prof.	18	4.5	2.0	5.5	55.6
Eco. Disadvantaged	59	14.6	15.9	23.9	55.5
2004-05	*Count*	*Percent*	*Campus*	*District*	*State*
African American	4	1.1%	2.2%	.9%	14.2%
Latino	**51**	**13.6**	**13.2**	**16.3**	**44.7**
White	314	83.5	83.3	81.2	37.7
Limited Eng. Prof.	12	3.2	1.9	4.8	15.6
Eco. Disadvantaged	57	15.2	19.6	23.9	54.6
2003-04	*Count*	*Percent*	*Campus*	*District*	*State*
African American	1	.3	2.0	.8	14.3
Latino	**38**	**11**	**9.5**	**14**	**43.8**
White	301	87.2	86.6	83.7	38.7
Limited Engl. Prof	6	1.7	1.2	2.4	15.3
Eco. Disadvantaged	46	13.3	14.9	21.4	52.8

(AEIS Reports, Texas Education Agency 2003 - 2008)

Completing her first year in the high school as a Spanish teacher, Jenny, who had worked in the district previously as a paraprofessional and Communities and Schools Director, described the influx of diverse students she has witnessed in the district:

> When I started in 2003 in the elementary school, I worked primarily with the ESL or LEP students. There were a small handful of students, maybe 12 or 15, no more than 20, and now I want to say, it's tripled. I mean the numbers are pretty up there. It's a significant portion of the population now. So yeah, I can see a good change, and it's been—I guess that was in 2003—six years. (INT: SP1: 16 – 19)

During the interviews, respondents continuously referred to the increase in the Latino population, especially regarding English language learners. This will be a target of more elaboration later in the chapter.

Faculty

Unlike the student population, the faculty of Eagle High School has remained predominantly homogenous over the years. Currently, the high school is comprised of fifty-two staff members. Of the forty-two classroom teachers and educational paraprofessionals, thirty-eight are Caucasian, one is African American, and three are Latino. Both administrators and the school counselor are Caucasian as well as the remaining support staff. One office attendant is Latino. The largest percentage of instructional staff members of color at the high school over the last several years occurred in 2008 – 09: three Latino and one African American. The year prior there were three teachers of color, before that, two, and in 2005 - 06, one. None of the teachers of color over the past four years instructed a core subject.

Overall, Eagle High School has a very high retention rate for teachers: 24.3% have 1 - 5 years teaching experience, 47.8% of teachers have been in the district 6 - 20 years, and 14.1% have over 20 years teaching experience (District Annual Report, 2006 - 07). Overall, teachers enjoy working at Eagle High School. With self-assurance, one teacher gladly shared (RJ), "I

have the best teaching job in the United States. I truly believe that" (INT: MT: 44 - 45).

Culture of Excellence

Eagle High School, striving to uphold the district motto of "Excellence in Education," has an outstanding reputation for academic and extra-curricular achievement. Compared to other small schools in the area, Eagle High offers a rigorous course selection, comprised of honors and dual credit courses, Diversified Career Programs (DCP), biotech classes, and advanced science and math courses. The mean SAT and ACT scores are slightly higher than the state average. The percentage of students who graduate under a recommended degree plan are also higher than the state average, 83.2% compared to the state average of 75.7% (District Annual Report, 2006 - 07). Based on the number of transcripts that the counselor processes to universities and two-year colleges, nearly 90% of EHS students apply to college, many attending Division I schools. In the last few years, one student was accepted to Harvard, another to West Point, and two were named National Merit Scholars.

For a number of years, Eagle High School students have excelled in state University Interscholastic League (UIL) academic competitions, such as debate and math number sense, winning state for the school on six different occasions, the second most of any 2A high school in Texas. In addition, the athletic program prides itself on winning an array of sports events. In 2008 - 09, the high school received the prestigious statewide award, The Lone Star Cup. This honor is bestowed upon schools that have the highest achievement record in both academic and athletic UIL events.

TAKS Performance

Currently, Eagle High School is an Academically Acceptable campus as designated by the Texas Education Agency for performance on the Texas Accountability for Knowledge and

Skills (TAKS) test. The state's accountability system has the following categories of rankings: exemplary, recognized, acceptable, and unacceptable. The high school has seen significant improvement over the last several years in most subject areas and sub-groups.

While the high school has been rated Academically Acceptable the past few years, both the Caucasian and Latino populations have scored high in reading. However, in math, Caucasian students have scored 86% the last two years, while Latino students have scored 68% (2007) and 67% (2008). In the area of science, Caucasian students increased in 2007 to 2008 from 81% to 89%; Latino students increased as well, but only from 50% to 56%. One great increase in TAKS scores for Latino students was in Social Studies, increasing from 79% in 2007 to 94% in 2008 (TEA, 2008b). Although Latino students are currently scoring high in the areas of reading and social studies, there are major discrepancies in math and science.

Research Question One

How does a small, rural high school respond to its changing demographic, particularly in its Latino student population?

Eagle High School has experienced small but steady growth in its Latino student population over the last several years; inevitably, the high school and district has responded. Overall, the research unveiled four key responses. The focal theme throughout each of the responses could be described simply: support. Eagle High School faculty and staff conveyed both *evidence of* and *lack of* support for its staff and its Latino student population.

Ultimately, the school has responded with much support for both its teachers and Latino population regarding diversity in multiple domains. However, the question still prevails: is it enough? Feelings of frustration, uncertainty, and questioning what should be done next also

transpired. The subsequent text highlights not only the theme of increased support, but later unmasks deficiencies in support as well.

INCREASED SCHOOL SUPPORT

The research found that the changing demographics of Eagle High School resulted in increased school support. Overall, many staff members feel that they are more supported now compared to years past. One of the Spanish teachers commented that "…the school has been pretty receptive" (INT: ST1: 100) to the increasing numbers of Latino learners. The ESL teacher also noted that she has noticed increased support from teachers and administrators. "At my campus, they've [high school staff] responded well, and they do make accommodations for the language issue. They do a lot more" (INT: ESL: 132 - 134). As the ensuing sections reveal, increased school support is evident because of the high school adding more personnel and resources, encouraging more teacher training and professional development, seeking advice from outside sources, and embracing the Latino culture.

Personnel and Resources - *My school hired me!*

Eagle High School staff conveyed that there is more support from the school because of the increase in personnel and resources. The Eagle High School's Campus Improvement Plan (CIP) under Goal 1: *Increasing student achievement*, calls for "increased ESL staff and resources" pending "funding allotment" (CIP, 2009). Principal Kathy noted that the school has recently responded to the increase in English language learners over the last few years by hiring a full-time ESL teacher for the high school as opposed to having only one teacher serve the entire district. She added that just this year another half time ESL teacher was hired at the junior high school in River Town (INT: PRIN: 30 - 33).

When questioning the ESL teacher, Kelly, of her experiences at the high school and the

changes she has encountered, she enthusiastically exclaimed (RJ), "My school has hired me!" (INT: ET: 128). She described the school environment previous to her hiring:

> When I got here, it was four years ago. There wasn't a person; there wasn't an advocate; there wasn't a teacher on the campus with an ESL student. The teachers had very limited support because there was one ESL teacher in the district. (INT: ET: 174 – 177)

She explained that before she was hired, the sole ESL teacher's former workload consisted of about sixty students, mostly at the elementary and intermediate schools. As a result, little time was spent with the high school ESL students. Kelly explained that teachers had no one to turn to for support regarding how to meet the needs of the ESL students that were continuously entering their classrooms. She continued:

> So there wasn't really an advocate on campus. There wasn't somebody you know, visiting with them [teachers] about these kids on a daily basis. But now since I've gotten here, I can discuss the concerns with the teachers because they do have concerns and they don't know the best way to either modify [assignments or instructional strategies] or get work from their kids. So I'm there as a resource for them. I'm there to support them. (INT: ET: 184 - 189)

By having an advocate on campus, the Eagle High School teachers' confidence level increased, easing their minds about how to best serve non-English speaking students. As Kelly demonstrated, having a full-time ESL instructor on campus served as a support system for students and teachers alike.

> I think that, just having support…they're more comfortable with the kids and how to deal with someone who's not speaking English in their class, that they become more comfortable. They're more comfortable asking me questions and looking for help from me and they're also more comfortable with my kids. . . .I think it's more positive since I've been here, not necessarily because of me, but just because they have somebody to question. (INT: ET: 191 - 198)

Besides hiring an ESL teacher, the school has responded by adding additional resources. For instance, Lydia, the home economics teacher, observed, "I think the school has really responded well," noting that many of the school documents are translated in Spanish. Lydia

recollected:

> I think that some of the literature and notices that go out to the parents are English/Spanish, and I know if there are ARDs or conferences or whatever, there are translators. So I think the school has really done pretty well as far as trying to accommodate students [and parents] who have a limited English speaking ability. (INT: HE: 54 - 57)

Other documents that the school provides in Spanish include pre-registration information, health and transportation forms, and the Student Code of Conduct. Currently, the school's student handbook is being translated in Spanish as well.

The Campus Improvement Plan calls for the campus to "review and strengthen remedial tactics for struggling students," (CIP, 2008–09) outlining several programs that teachers may access for all students as well as Latino students struggling academically. Some of these resources include: Grand Central Station (resource, classroom support program), Rallye Read (reading intervention program), academic detention, mentor program, Student Assistance Program (SAP),[8] summer school, instructional modules, and TAKS classes/tutorials (CIP, 2008 - 09). In addition to these programs offered during the school year, English language learners may attend the ELL academy offered in the summer to strengthen their English skills. In addition, during an April 2008 school board meeting, results of the Annual Sunset Review for the ESL program were presented. One of the recommendations, *all campuses use same home language survey*, has been implemented, and another, *evaluate the need for more ESL teachers/aides,* has not only been fulfilled, but additional staff since this time have been added.

Training - *I think it's working!*

Another perception of increased support for teachers involved their training. Teachers sensed that training is currently more prevalent within EHS to support teachers in a diverse

[8] Committee comprised of principal, counselor, and teachers that identify students that are struggling socially, academically, etc.

setting. Goal 1 of the Campus Improvement Plan (CIP), Objective 1.2 states: *Incorporate innovative instructional practices that meet the needs of every student.* Under this objective, two initiatives address meeting Latino learners' needs via teacher training: 1.2A: *Apply the Sheltered Instruction Observational Protocol (SIOP) model for lesson planning,* and 1.2E: *Provide professional development for creative assessment strategies* (CIP, 2007-08). Many teachers attested that more training has been available, particularly Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP).[9]

The teachers at Eagle High School all confirmed that they had participated in the required SIOP training. The principal described SIOP as "…a methodology of teaching…making teachers aware of strategies that they can use in their classroom to help English language learners" (INT: PRIN: 120 - 121) that is gradually being implemented at the high school in phases. Principal Kathy added:

> But at this point, we're doing it a little at a time. Next summer, we will have a full training for everybody that's here. But I think it works. I do think it works. I think it helps. I don't think it's anything that they [teachers] don't do; I just think it's just awareness and very simple little strategies they can do that helps not only the ESL students, but maybe some of the slower learners, the other kids that are having difficulty also. It helps them as well. (INT: PRIN: 157 - 161)

Principal Kathy explained that all members of the staff were required to attend the training, and, overall, they "responded well," giving up early mornings and devoting a large "commitment of time" to the training. In the next semester, another level of the training will be implemented; teachers will be required to participate in more classroom observations of one another. Again, she emphasized comfortably (RJ), "And I think it works…in fact, their lesson plans are all turned in now on SIOP, or formatted so that it's following the strategies of SIOP, and I think it's working" (INT: PRIN: 176 - 177).

[9] Sheltered Based Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) is discussed more fully in Chapter 2.

In addition to SIOP, the ESL teacher has facilitated much of the training available to teachers regarding English language learners intermittently throughout the school year and summer months. Kelly described some of the training that she offers:

> We will be doing training this summer on the English language proficiency standards that will be part of the curriculum…the teachers will have more responsibility for that. We have offered training to the teachers—Mrs. Stanford[10] and I have—on teaching strategies for ELL students and the ways classroom teachers can assess besides paper/pencil tests…We're doing the summer professional development. We need more. (INT: ET: 233 - 239)

All teachers are required to attend the English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS) training in the summer. Kelly explained that the ELPS are replacing the current ESL TEKS and that all teachers must adhere to their implementation. Currently, teachers are required to include the ELPS in their lesson plans. Additionally, Kelly and the elementary ESL instructor have provided the majority of the ESL trainings for teachers throughout the district. Kelly urged that more training is necessary; the request for additional training will be discussed more thoroughly later in the chapter.

Kelly also shared some of the training she has recently received from the Regional Service Center, particularly for assessment.

> I've been trained in assessing their needs through the different testing that we do and the programs that we use like the Woodcock Johnson…then we use Rosetta Stone and Lexia and those types of programs for my personal assessment. (INT: ET: 216 - 219)

A couple of staff members recalled a voluntary training held within the last couple years led by the Spanish teacher who met with teachers after school to instruct them in basic Spanish words and phrases that they could use in the classroom. The Spanish teacher who conducted this class pronounced, "…*academically*, I think more teachers are reaching out to address their [Latino students] issues. I [led the] Spanish for Teachers class for the teachers to get a little

[10] Pseudonym

more information about what words they can use in the classroom" (INT: ST2: 101 - 103). About twenty-five teachers participated in the class that was held twice in a semester for professional development hours. Although the intent of the class was well intended, ironically, one cannot learn many Spanish words and phrases in only two classes.

The counselor, Judy, discussed recent training provided by the Regional Service Center regarding how to best address ESL students' learning needs with the principal and special education instructor. The Regional Service Center serves as a helpful resource for EHS teachers and staff seeking training opportunities regarding how to teach ESL students and implement ESL strategies in content area courses. Judy explained that the training was "excellent" and that its focus was to target the specific learning challenges for non-English speakers, as well as beneficial teaching strategies that can be used in the classroom. The information from the training was presented to the staff in a faculty meeting.

Outside sources - *What's everyone else doing?*

Besides more training and resources, several staff members emphasized the use of outside sources for assistance in responding to Eagle High School's changing demographic. Examining other schools' responses has been a prevailing measure of guiding the school toward better answers. A few staff members commented on the efforts to look closely at other school's responses. Principal Kathy explained, "We [have] visited other schools to see what programs that they're using to implement that are effective with ESL students" (INT: PRIN: 33 - 34). Principal Kathy, along with other members of the EHS staff, observed two nearby school districts over the past few years hoping to find programs, teaching strategies, and other services that might benefit their ELL population.

Similarly, the River Town District initiated several meetings with its closest neighboring

school district that also housed a large Latino student population and numerous English language learners. Principal Kathy, the ESL instructor, and several other members of the district participated in two meetings that occurred in the 2007 - 08 school year. During these sessions, it was proposed that the two districts work together in a co-op in hopes to establish a true bi-lingual education program on both campuses. The members in attendance proposed that elementary grade levels should be serviced in the River Town district while high school students would receive service in the neighboring district in an effort to better meet the needs of English language learners within both districts. Some other suggestions that transpired from the meetings entailed: providing bilingual classes; more translation of literature; newcomer's program and classes; ESL parent liaison and parent coordinator; mentors for English language learners; intramural soccer between districts. Unfortunately, at this time, nothing has transpired from those discussions.

Culturally - *Embracing diversity*

Evidence indicated that Eagle High School supported Spanish language and culture within the school. Contemporary research contends that needs and strengths of students are most effectively addressed when their cultures are taken into account (Gay, 1993; Berg-Tilton et al., 1996; Wrigley, 2000). Principal Kathy understood the significance of instilling language and culture and supporting diversity throughout the school, reflecting on her own experiences when she previously lived in the Rio Grande Valley area of Texas.

> …it's not good for kids to be in a mono-language or mono-culture [school setting] because that's not the world we live in…. I think it's good for them to mix and mingle because when they leave high school and go to colleges and into the workforce, they need to be around all cultures, whether it's Latino or black or Asian or whatever that is. I think that's what the world is made of and they need to see that. So it's good. This is a good thing. (INT: PRIN: 50 - 53)

When questioning Jenny, first year Spanish teacher, about what she perceived the school

has accomplished to positively impact Latino students, she responded that the school was in " . . . a good step in that direction" (INT: JB: 119). Jenny felt confident that the school truly *wants* to embrace all cultures. She recollected that she has heard from staff members, "Let's offer [a] cultural awareness class" (INT: ST1: 144 - 115) and other positive suggestions for infusing culture into the educational milieu. The cultural awareness class would serve as a humanities class; however, this class has not yet been implemented. Jenny continued to cite multiple examples of the school's effort to support culture:

> They've opened up another level of Spanish class which further develops language and cultural awareness all over the world everywhere, not just Mexico or Guatemala or Spain, but every Spanish-speaking part of the world…. so really exposing people to all those areas. Also, I think that the school is slowly trying to do other things like allowing activities for Cinco de Mayo, for Día de Los Muertos, events that we consider in the Latin community significant and symbolic, like the Fourth of July or Christmas, you know, in our culture…they're allowing students and families and the culture to celebrate and take those traditions as serious as they do. That, and I think that the school is also trying to export other classes that might help to encourage diversity, cultural awareness, either through electives or through music, exposing them in band to different forms of music, different cultural backgrounds in music or in choir…. (INT: ST1: 101 – 110)

Jenny explained that the school has expanded their support of culture in the classrooms, allowing more cultural activities throughout the school. This supports the results from the 2007-08 Sunset Review that recommended that the district *honor more [Latino] holidays (e.g., Cinco de Mayo festivities)*. Later in the chapter, more discussion will emerge that provide evidence of the school members' support of Latino students' culture, as well as the need for faculty members to better understand diversity and Latino students' backgrounds specifically.

As a result of increased school support, the school is better equipped to positively impact the Latino student population. The math teacher of thirty-eight years expressed, "I think we do a pretty good job in this school of meeting the needs of our students, a pretty good job" (INT: MT: 23 - 34).

SUPPORTING STUDENTS

The previous paragraphs suggested that Eagle High School has supported diversity in the form of increasing personnel and resources, instilling more training, seeking advice from outside sources, and embracing culture. The following sections reveal how Eagle High School has responded to changing demographics by supporting students more directly, investigating the response of individual staff members. "I think that as a group, we try to do whatever we possibly can to accommodate whatever their [Latino student population] needs are" (INT: HE: 86 - 87). The research discovered widespread yet sufficient evidence of EHS staff's individual efforts of supporting Latino students' social wellbeing, culture, native language, and academics as well as their lives beyond high school.

Social Well Being - *Someone knows they're here and is paying attention!*

Several staff members enlightened the discussion by providing examples of how they demonstrated social support of the Latino student population. Kelly announced that she has worked to "…get them [ESL students] out and comfortable, comfortable talking to their teachers, comfortable with their peers. That's what I try to do" (INT: ET: 147 - 160). While Judy shared, ". . . if they've had any kind of social needs or anything like that, I'll try to be…helpful if I could" (INT: GC: 67 - 68). Valuing and caring for students, deflecting derogatory remarks, and encouraging school involvement characterized support of Latino students' social well-being as described below.

Value and care

Some teachers strove to ease Latino students' experiences at school by relating to them or by helping them feel comfortable in their surroundings. When I asked Jenny, the first year Spanish teacher, what she did to support students, she answered:

> I am very receptive to them… it's something I value. I'm very receptive to the needs, the sensitivity, to the families, to the social differences, the struggles, all those things. I can appreciate what they've been through. (INT: ST1: 135 - 137)

As noted earlier, Jenny and her family moved to River Town when she was young; they were one of the only Latino families in town. With deep care and sincerity, Jenny envisioned her job in the high school as a role model to the younger generation of Latino students (RJ):

> You know, I think… I've really tried to just be a role model. I don't know that I'm the best, but you know, just tried to encourage and motivate and not only the Latino culture, but the Anglo, the American culture, the European just so that everybody has value and that we all can kind of appreciate what we all have to offer, our talents and strengths. But primarily…it's just trying to encourage them that through education it's possible to really do well or to have that opportunity to succeed. It's pretty much up to you what you make of it, what you want, your direction, you know? (INT: ST1: 124 - 129)

When I asked Coach Kyle, government economics teacher, how he supported the Latino population, he responded with a smile (RJ) and described his attempts to help Latino students feel more comfortable within the school, regardless of whether or not they were athletes:

> [Latino students] like to kid around a lot, so when it's not in a classroom setting, even the ones that aren't necessarily my athletes, I'll give them a hard time in the hall, you know maybe as we're walking down the hall, kind of give them an elbow or something like that, just horseplay tomfoolery. When the teacher or somebody is horse playing and kidding around with them, that kind of gives them a sense of they belong here, you know? "Coach must like me because he's messing with me in the hall and I don't even play basketball for him." So it gives it kind of a relationship that they have with somebody in the school that's one of their teachers and then they know, "Yeah, the teacher sure-- You know, they like me. They like me being here. They play with me. They kid with me," so stuff like that. Just trying to let them know that somebody knows they're here. The teacher knows they're here and is paying attention. (INT: GE: 79 - 90)

Coach Kyle wished to be approachable to all students and believed in the importance of making conscious efforts to help all students from diverse backgrounds feel comfortable in the school environment. He believed strongly that teachers' roles consisted of helping Latino students find a "sense of worth and importance" (INT: GE: 46).

Similarly, the math teacher, Danny, thoughtfully shared his experiences of working with

students at the end of the year during a specialized two-week academic intervention called Flex Days[11]. Danny seemed to really enjoy those two weeks; it was a different kind of teaching experience for him, subtly hinting that he may have possibly learned something from working with struggling, diverse learners (RJ):

> Again, in the flex days, I did have contact with quite a few Hispanic students and I enjoyed it a lot, and what I tried to do was to help them warm up to the idea a little bit, the idea that math is fun and that it's useful. Some seemed to respond to that. Several made comments to me at one time or another, either at the end of the day or at the end of the flex schedule that they'd enjoyed it and they thanked me. I just tried to show them the same caring that I'd show any other student. (INT: MT: 39 - 44)

Typically, Danny's honors classes did not contain many Latino students; therefore, during the course of the school day, Danny has experienced less contact with diverse learners compared to his colleagues. However, it seemed that he connected with Latino learners more during Flex Days and encouraged their math studies.

Derogatory remarks

Eagle High School staff members were faced with moments of deflecting derogatory remarks made about one's culture or ethnic background. For instance, Jenny illustrated that students may mumble an offensive comment that they think is funny, but then she is faced with the challenge of "trying not to call out that student but somehow capture that it's offensive" (INT: ST1: 46 - 48). She worried that the small-town atmosphere contributes to Latino students making derogatory comments about themselves to "fit in" whereas in a larger town, the same remarks may not be tolerated by students of the same ethnicity. Jenny, one of the only Latino teachers in school, continued to poignantly explain:

…Hispanics [make the derogatory remarks] because it's sometimes a self-defense

[11] EHS received a waiver from the state granting them a two week period at the end of the year that only required students who did not pass TAKS, did not pass a class, or who had less than 90% attendance to attend. All other students were dismissed two weeks before summer break.

> mechanism where you yourself are insulting your population to help join the crowd. So that has been something that we've kind of tried to address but in a way that it doesn't isolate anybody and that they can learn from it because River Town is small town. It's a small town, and you may be able to mumble something and have it addressed, but in another setting, in a bigger town or a different atmosphere, you can mumble the same thing and be completely taken very offensively and be assaulted or worse. So just kind of getting a bigger picture of careful and let's all appreciate each other; you know, there's value in every culture. (INT: ST1: 52 - 58)

Jenny seemed discouraged by the students making insults about their own culture as a "defense mechanism" just to "join the crowd" (RJ). She also worried about the wellbeing of her students once they left the safety of a small town high school making remarks were other students might view them more offensively.

Principal Kathy noted that the name-calling bothered her most when she first came to River Town from South Texas fifteen years earlier. She was under the impression that "…a lot of times, kids that are not around Latinos don't know what those words mean," describing them as "…very hurtful" (INT: PRIN: 59 - 62). However, she felt that negative comments are not as prevalent as they were when she first came to Eagle High School. As we discussed the changes in the school, Principal Kathy spoke of the decrease of negative comments, seemingly sincere in her belief that derogatory comments are not as blatant or common as in the past (RJ).

> It happens somewhat, but I've not heard of it. I think that everyone has become a little more sensitive, and we really don't hear that as much anymore that I'm aware of. I do know it happens. Absolutely it happens, but it's not as-- I've just not really heard…as much. (INT: PRIN: 71 - 74)

Extra-curricular

Many teachers commented that additional support has taken the form of encouraging Latino students to be more involved in extra-curricular activities. Many teachers thought that this aided in the students' successes at school and gave the Latino students a sense of belonging and "fitting in." Coach Kyle attested, "I have tried to recruit some into athletics" (INT: GE: 79).

Becky, a teacher in the high school for seven years, confirmed the change in extra-curricular involvement of Latino students, particularly in athletics. "What I've seen is a change in the athletics department where they [Latino students] participate more in sports. That never was when I first came [to work at Eagle High School]" (INT: ST2: 99 - 100). Becky portrayed a sense of gratification that students were engaging more in school activities than in the past (RJ).

Coach Kyle agreed, perceiving that Latino students who are more involved in extracurricular activities seemed to experience more academic success than those that were not. He explained:

> I know the [students] who are in extracurricular activities tend to excel more than those who are not in extracurricular activities, so you know, find a place for them and something to do…giving them a sense of worth and importance I think is what needs to be done. (INT: GE: 44 - 46)

Likewise, Kelly, the ESL teacher believed her role went beyond supporting Latino students in the classroom. She stressed that supporting their needs also meant "…trying to make them more visible and giving the opportunity to have a positive impact in the student population on the different teams" (INT: ET: 142 - 143). Kelly continued to render an example of a student she has encouraged to get involved in school:

> I have [a student] who is being recruited for next year to be on the UIL social studies team because he's done so well in his history classes and he's very knowledgeable. He will have issues with the writing portion of [the competition], because there's an essay, but they want to use him to do that because he's so good at the history. He's good at memorizing and very interested. (INT: ET: 143 - 150)

Kelly proceeded to explain that as a result of Latino students becoming more involved, they have acclimated more to the school environment; hence, teachers seem to be more accepting of them, understanding more the positive contributions all students can make to the school.

> …as the kids have gone out and joined track teams and art clubs and they're more present in [activities] outside of this classroom, the teachers are …more comfortable and have a more positive feeling about the kids and want to help and see what they can

> contribute. Just because they can't speak English doesn't mean they don't have anything to contribute, and [teachers] are learning how to [encourage students to participate]. (INT: ET: 189 - 195)

Overall, the majority of Latino students at EHS have been persuaded to become a part of the school culture; EHS teachers perceived that they were helping them to adjust successfully to their educational environment by supporting this involvement.

Culture - *We are all tied together!*

A few teachers expressed the importance of supporting students' cultures. Particularly descriptive was the first year Spanish teacher, Jenny, who noted that supporting culture was easier in her classroom compared to others. From music to economics and holidays to celebrities, Jenny revealed a multitude of cultural activities and topics infused in her lessons. Enthusiastically (RJ), Jenny described her Spanish classroom and how her students seemed "enlightened" by culture:

> It's really easy for the kids that are taking Spanish to have a stronger appreciation for embracing another culture beyond what they know. The Latino or Latin culture is very influential in Texas, so it's been a breath of fresh air to actually do activities that [all of the students] want to learn about and they enjoy beyond the food—you know, learning about economics, government, infrastructure, the social differences, educational differences. It's also allowed an appreciation for being in the U.S. because we have learned about the cultural struggles in the Latin communities…. (INT: ST1: 24 - 32)

Later she mentioned that she used the cultural component at the end of each curriculum unit, allowing her to easily "connect culture" to "… the music influence, the people, the celebrities…and then also recognizing how holidays are celebrated in other cultures" (INT: ST1: 32 - 31). Jenny believed that the strongest lesson that her students were most receptive to this year was "… learning about El Día de Los Muertos, learning that it was a celebration of people's lives, breaking beyond the misconception that it's a pagan holiday (INT: ST1: 32 - 36).

Infusing culture is such an important attribute in a classroom because, like Becky pointed

out, "some of them [Latino students] are not knowing much about their own culture" (INT: ST2: 88 - 89). Similar to Jenny, Becky described that in her Spanish class:

> I try to make my classroom one where you can look around and see *Don Quixote* and Cervantes, the flags of the countries. It's interesting when they come in. They identify their flags immediately…. They can enjoy learning a little bit more of the culture and of course they bring in the food of the area when it's a fiesta. So that's all a positive. (INT: ST2: 249 - 252, 34 - 35)

Both teachers felt that their Spanish classrooms were more conducive to supporting the cultural heritage of Spanish speaking groups compared to other classrooms. Additionally, Kelly believed that she may encourage some of the discussions that transpire in her classroom regarding students' culture too much!

> I let the kids—probably too much…..talk about Latino culture, mostly Mexican because most of my kids are from Mexico. But I had a student who was from Columbia. We discuss culture a lot. [From my perspective] as a Texan American I feel like I am sensitive to culture and I let [my students] share and they feel proud about their culture. Then I share with them ours and hopefully it's okay to-- Which I think makes them feel less threatened about learning English, you know, because I do make such a big deal about their own culture and how tied together we are, how their culture, especially in Mexico and Texas, how everything is tied together. And they respond to that, they're not losing any [of their own] culture. (INT: ET: 311 - 320)

All three of these teachers understand that embedding the curriculum with cultural discussions, traditions, and activities are essential characteristics of an effective and respectful classroom environment. These faculty members support the literature that outlines that teachers who create caring environments that are sensitive to other cultural systems (Pang, 1994) and take into account students' heritage and backgrounds will enhance their diverse students' learning experiences (Wrigley, 2000; Gay, 2000).

Language - A *way to relate*

A number of teachers supported Latino learners by encouraging the Spanish language. As the principal previously indicated, "…it's not good for kids to be in a mono-language or

mono-culture because that's not the world we live in" (INT: PRIN: 50 - 51).

Becky, the veteran Spanish teacher, emphasized the importance of Latino students' native language. She hoped that teachers would encourage students "to do more with their language. Encourage them to be in touch with the language grammatically and then the literature, to let them understand better what the language offers, not just for communication but linguistically as well as culturally" (INT: ST2: 84 - 86).

Most of the teachers involved in this study spoke some Spanish. Only two of the staff members were fluent (INT: SP1, SP2), two others had a moderate use of the language (INT: PRINC, GC), while the others used only basic words and phrases. Whichever the case, most teachers used the Spanish language at one time or another for various reasons. For instance, some teachers indicated that they attempted to speak Spanish in an effort to relate to students. The government/economics teacher, Coach Kyle, stated that he has had very few non-English speaking students in his classes. Therefore, he used Spanish "more on the social" level and explained, "You just do it sometimes because we hear it" (INT: GE: 267). He continued, "So when I'm teaching, I'm not thinking about [using] Spanish words, but certain words will come out every once in a while" (INT: GE: 260 - 261). Jenny also confirmed that she uses Spanish out of respect.

> Why would I use Spanish? …Well, I think in Texas, it's really our second language. The other thing is that [for] some of our students that that's their primary language, that's their dominant language, but even some of our faculty. Well, not faculty, but some of our staff—our custodians, our cafeteria workers, our maintenance people. Addressing them in their native language is very respectful to me. (INT: ST1: 181 - 185)

Unlike Jenny, the other Spanish teacher, Becky, had an outlook on speaking Spanish with her students that was vastly different. Initially, Becky seemed to believe she had a special duty to converse with Latino students in Spanish because she is ". . . the only one [that can]. Other

teachers can't. The others can't carry on conversations with them" (INT: ST2: 210 - 211). Although she admitted to speaking Spanish often with Latino students simply because "that's my thing," she noted that sometimes she felt she was doing them a disservice. Similar to white students in her Spanish classes that she felt should often hear the Spanish language in and out of class, she believed that such is true of Latino students; struggling English learners should always be encouraged to speak English. Becky declared that, at times, she spoke Spanish to Latino students because "they have had enough English during the day" (INT: ST2: 226 - 227), yet she felt that this practice was not always best. The Latino students "should be speaking English" according to Becky (INT: ST2: 206) so that they can improve their English skills more quickly.

Academic - *Help get the best fit instructionally!*

Teachers often discussed examples of how they support Latino students academically inside the classroom. First, instructional support that the teachers used is outlined, followed by other notions regarding the assistance Latino learners.

Instructional

Goal 1 of the Eagle High School Campus Improvement Plan stated: *EHS will increase student achievement and instructional leadership.* Two objectives that support this goal encompassed Latino student populations:

- Objective 1.1: Increase achievement for <u>all</u> students and all subpopulations in reading/language arts, math, science, and social studies.
- Objective 1.2: Incorporate innovative instructional practices that meet the needs of <u>every</u> student (CIP, 2009).

Several teachers cited examples of how they provided instructional support for the Latino students at EHS by adhering to several of the Campus Improvement Plan objectives listed above.

For instance, Kelly, the ESL teacher, explained that having Latino students in the classroom "…affects how the teacher teaches…and…presents material when my kids are in the room" (INT: ESL: 10). "More visuals, more repetition, more vocabulary, direct teaching of vocabulary, multiple ways, many times" (INT: ESL: 38 – 39) are all strategies that Kelly believed are more prevalent in classrooms with English language learners. With her ESL students in her classroom, Kelly responded to them by "teaching them the language, working on their grammar" (INT: ESL: 142).

Lydia, the home economics teacher, remarked that her planning is affected when she has students with limited English abilities because she seeks out:

> . . . other sources and resources to help them to understand the information that they need to know for my class. So in my planning, I have to try to make [the way I explain] things a little bit more simplistic, not to water down the lesson, but to make the process a little bit simpler so they get the same information the other students get. (INT: HE: 17 - 20)

Lydia listed more examples of accommodating English language learners' abilities:

> I will pair [English language learners] with someone who has a stronger English language. I will take more time with them individually trying to help them and [I will use] gestures, with my limited Spanish speaking ability. Then also, I will send them to our ESL teacher. (INT: HE: 66 - 68)

Similarly, Coach Kyle also utilized different strategies for students who struggle with the English language:

> Now, there have been a few instances where I've had kids who were a little bit slower in their English, and it didn't really affect [their academic performance] overall. I would just give them a buddy who would help them with notes, and then like when we do the Declaration of Independence, I would bring up the Spanish version [on the Internet] and give it to them so that they would have that one. (INT: GE: 23 - 28)

Becky saw great advantages to having Spanish speakers in her classroom because having a native speaker allowed other students to "hear the accent" (INT: ST2: 30). Becky credited the Spanish speakers in her classroom as becoming "experts" which allows them the opportunity to

"blossom" in the classroom (INT: ST2: 87).

The school counselor, Judy, also indicated that she strove to help Latino students academically by "keeping lines of communication open" between herself and the ESL instructor (INT: GC: 68). Recognizing their individual differences, she stated sincerely (RJ):

> Those students have special needs, especially those that have limited English proficiency. I try to be aware of their needs and help get the best fit instructionally and testing-wise for them.... I really enjoy that. I like to. I think that's part of my job as a counselor. (INT: GC: 16 - 19)

Additionally, Kelly mentioned the importance of finding the right testing accommodations for ELLs. For instance, she noted that some teachers "…take a drawing versus a paper/pencil test" and "…are doing alternative forms of assessment to make sure they know it" (INT: ESL: 134 - 135).

In addition to the Campus Improvement Plan, the high school presented to the school board meeting in February, 2007, outlining some of the schools goals and achievements. Some of the 2007 – 08 goals included: respond to the increasing number of ESL students; raise cultural sensitivity; and implement SIOP to address needs of ESL and struggling learners. One achievement highlighted was the Latino student gains in all subject areas on TAKS. Additionally, the District Annual Report 2006 – 07 specified under Goal 2: *Students will be encouraged and challenged to meet their potential* that 1) 80 percent of the ESL student will pass the reading portion of the TAKS after exiting the ESL program, and 2) TELPAS scores will go up 1 rating for students enrolled in the ESL program. To date, neither of these challenges has been met at the high school, although the scores in both areas are increasing for ESL students.

Thinking outside the box. . .

Throughout the discussion, several teachers demonstrated some "outside the box" thinking that might benefit Latino students. These unique ideas, which may or may not ever

come to fruition, deserve a place in this commentary for they exemplify staff members' desires to support Latino students' academic needs.

First, the Spanish teacher, Becky, suggested that her Spanish classes be split in two so that she can serve Latino Spanish speakers and Caucasian Spanish speakers better by addressing their different language levels. She explained that it is important "that someone teaches pure Latino students because they already know how to speak [the language]" (INT: SP2: 180 - 181). She continued:

> In my one class of level IV when I had both Anglo and Latino, it was black and white….the poor Anglos who went all the way up through the language learning classes…but they didn't grasp the literature as quickly as the others…So they just sat there…. (INT: SP2: 183 - 185)

Whereas her native Spanish speakers were ready to tackle the literature, her Caucasian students were not as progressed, thus the class was vastly split by students' language abilities. Becky stressed that, "It would be nice for another language to be offered where they [Latino students] go through the entire process of learning vocabulary, basic vocabulary and grammar" (INT: ST2: 187 - 188). As a result, Spanish speakers can have the same experience as their Caucasian peers of learning the fundamentals of a new language entirely.

Another idea that transpired stemmed from the ESL teacher who suggested immersion, English-only for non-English speaking students. "If they're new to the English language, I think they need to have intense English for a period of time, whatever that may be…six weeks or six months or the whole year" (INT: ESL: 100 - 103). Kyle, government economics teacher, possessed the same thoughts and voiced that English language learners needed "…to be engulfed in learning English more before they start into the school system …so they need to learn English before they're thrown into history and algebra and all those things where people are throwing out stuff to them in English" (INT: GE: 222 - 224).

Of course, learning the English language first would benefit struggling English learners and likely aid in later success in other subject areas. Kyle voiced that non-English speakers be engulfed in English before entering the school system. However, where does a student go to be immersed? Schools are the *only* institutions with the mission of educating youth. School systems are designed to create an environment that addresses student learning, and it is within these environments that innovative practices must be crafted to reach the needs of all students.

In an effort to help English language learners acquire the language more quickly, Principal Kathy suggested entering into a co-op with nearby schools so that a true bilingual setting could emerge.

> I still think the best thing to do is to co-op with other small schools, just like we do with special education, just like we do for let's say behavior problem students, life skill students. I think that we should look at doing that with ESL kids, and if there are pods of 10-12 at each small school and you place those together, then you could truly have a bilingual school. (INT: PRIN: 129 – 137)

Inevitably, research shows that many small, rural schools enter into co-ops with neighboring schools in an effort to better service a variety of learners (McLaughlin et al., 1997). Additionally, Principal Kathy recommended that students should take more specialized subject area tests in their native language. "I don't think that's fair. If they were able, and they could take it in Spanish, then let's let them take it in Spanish. I think that would only be fair. At least give them a little bit more time" (INT: PRIN: 92 - 94). Additionally, Principal Kathy emphasized how difficult it is for non-English speakers to be expected to not only pass all their classes and learn English in a short period of time, but to pass the TAKS test as well to gain a diploma. With compassion latent with dissatisfaction (RJ), she attempted to suggest alternatives to the traditional route of graduating high school.

> Maybe we should change some of the requirements…Maybe [students should receive] a different type of a diploma. Maybe it's a work diploma, something that's attainable to

> them that's fair that meets their need…some of them are not wanting to graduate to be college bound but they want to go in the workforce.…They can't even go into the Armed Forces if they don't pass….I think we need to specifically look at what do they want when they leave high school. We're trying to make all those kids be proficient enough to go to college, and maybe that's not their goal. So why hold them back and not allow them to get a diploma? (INT: PRIN: 97 – 106)

Ultimately, Eagle High School staff members shared unique ideas to address the needs of Latino learners; unfortunately, much of the discussion remains only as mere suggestions.

Beyond High School – *Give them opportunities to be successful!*

Some faculty members indicated that students need help being successful once they graduate. To do so, they must first pass the statewide assessment, TAKS. Principal Kathy ardently explained the injustice she perceived in the system regarding the requirement that English language learners must participate in the high-stakes standardized tests that are a grim reality in Texas schools (RJ).

> …[it] is not fair to require these kids [new to the U.S.]…to be required to pass state standards…That really is not fair because research indicates it takes six to seven years to learn a language. We are asking these kids at 14, 15, 16 [years of age] to come into the United States [to]…pass a state assessment in three years…to be able to get a diploma…. (INT: PRIN: 81 – 87)

Principal Kathy explained that many people outside the school system believe that Latino dropouts are a result of them quitting school; that is not necessarily the case. "The truth is that they went through their years, completed their coursework but did not pass their TAKS test…they get a certificate of completion and… [no] diploma…" (INT: PRIN: 87 - 92). Principal Kathy articulates that "it's not fair" to require students new to the English language to pass not only the English test, but the science, math, and social studies as well. She posed the question, "…what are we doing to meet their needs?" (INT: PRIN: 110). Frustrated, she contends that struggling English learners might pass all their courses, but in the end, "they get really nothing out of it" (INT: PRIN: 111). She commiserates with the students that are unable to

pass state tests, declaring, "You raise these high school kids to graduate, to be proficient in a language and to get a job and be good citizens…if we're not giving them those outlets to do that, they can't raise a family and obtain a very good job, and that's not fair…" (INT: PRIN: 107 - 112).

Principal Kathy painted a picture of the reality facing struggling English learners regarding how the educational system, unfortunately, inhibits their ability to attain a diploma; hence, achieving success beyond high school is filled with difficulty.

The counselor of two years, Judy, felt strongly about meeting the needs of Latino students beyond high school. She explained:

> I feel personally with a couple of upper-level students, one that graduated this year and another one who's a junior who are very bright students that are going to face some real road blocks in the future now that they're out of high school or will be because of residency issues. I've tried to do some research and get them some information about what their options are after high school because I just feel like they are suited for better than just joining the labor workforce, which I think is about all that they would have at this point. I think that comes to my mind. I hope I've done some things for some of our other students, but that comes to my mind. (INT: GC: 52 - 59)

Kelly agreed that the school must equip student with the tools necessary to successfully function outside high school. She reflected:

> But in general, they contribute and we need to help them to be more successful. We need to give them more opportunities to be successful and we need to give them the tools to be successful so that when they leave [Eagle High School] that they're going to help our communities, that they're going to be skilled, that they're going to be trained. (INT: ESL: 159 - 163)

And with a big smile (RJ), Kelly ended with, "That's what I see. I love them!" (INT: ET: 163).

Interestingly, the resources, staff, and training that EHS teachers have received is comparatively higher than years before; therefore, it is understandable that teachers perceive more school support in that regard. Although many recognize that the school has responded

well, there is still a discrepancy in the amount of resources and training that EHS must pursue and instill to effectively meet diverse learners' strengths and needs.

LACK OF SCHOOL SUPPORT

When Eagle High School teachers were questioned if they believed the high school has met the strengths and needs of its Latino student population, most staff members acknowledged that the school has improved over the years; however, there was a concerted belief that room for improvement existed. One teacher responded that the school was *trying*; other staff members' responses ranged from *adequately* to *not at all.*

For instance, a teacher who expressed the school is responding "adequately" felt that there was room for improvement: "If we want to stick with adequate, that's okay, but I mean we could do better than adequate (INT: GE: 216 - 217). Concentrating with a great thought, (RJ) another teacher agreed:

> Um…I think more probably could be done. It's adequate, but I still think that we can move towards more, towards better. If I think of the whole, our general population, I think we're adequate as far as teaching all students, but of course there's always room for improvement…. (INT: HE: 152 - 155)

Other teachers deemed that the school was doing very little to meet Latino students strengths and needs. After the question was posed, one teacher immediately shook her head and whispered, "Noooooo" (RJ), expressing that the Latino student population needs and strengths "…have not been met as well as they can be and should be" (INT: ESL: 328 - 329). And when another teacher was asked if the school had responded well, she replied "no" and elaborated, "I think a lot of it has been basically because people don't know what are their needs, what are their strengths" (INT: ST1: 207 - 208).

The school counselor agreed, stating, "No. No. I know we have a lot of room for improvement—not just here, but statewide, probably nationally also" (INT: GC: 115 - 116). She

continued, “I think we’re a little bit behind the mark, honestly, and I think our superintendent is aware that we’re seeing maybe increasing numbers [in the Latino population] I think we’re going to have to look to the way some other districts in the state…serve these students” (INT: GC: 41 - 45).

Principal Kathy responded similarly. When questioned if she felt the school was meeting Latino students’ needs and strengths, Principal Kathy quietly answered (RJ), “No, I don’t. We have a long way to go” (INT: PRIN: 194).

As teachers discussed what was missing, hindering the school from better reaching its Latino population, resources and training continually resonated throughout the conversations. One teacher commenting on ESL students particularly declared that the school is doing “the best that they can right now,” and “…in this area—it’s a problem in all these small schools that have smaller ESL populations but they don't have the resources to fund technology or personnel or training… (INT: ET: 332 - 338).

While EHS teachers and administrators perceived much had been accomplished to help struggling language learners, they also thought that much more needed to be done and occasionally felt a paradoxical lack of support. The following outlined this notion of *lack of support*. Resources and training are indirect, yet necessary factors that staff members perceived missing from the educational setting that might benefit Latino students. Additionally, the school’s non-support is evidenced in staff members’ resistance to training.

Resources – *The best we can with what we have!*

Much of Eagle High School’s staff said that the school was doing the very best it could with the resources provided. One staff member commented that to effectively adapt to the increasing Latino student population, it is “…probably going to involve increasing personnel and

other costs" (INT: GC: 47). Another shared, "The resources are probably the biggest hang-up to us doing more" (INT: ET: 351).

Throughout the discussion, Kelly, the ESL teacher, emphasized the lack of resources available to her, the teachers, and to struggling English learners. She felt that the lack of resources was a result of being a smaller school:

> We lack resources because we're a smaller school and we don't have the resources for personnel. We don't have the resources for the technology, and so the smaller schools that have ESL populations suffer because there's lack of resources. (INT: ET: 64 - 68)

Additionally, Kelly continued that the reason "…is partly because being in a small school…you know, you just tend to focus on the larger group because that's how it operates" (INT: KC: 330 - 332). Kelly wished the school could bring a particular speaker that she heard at a workshop to the teachers; however, she expressed, "…we would love to have him here, but he costs a lot of money…He has great ideas and would do great training and the teachers would benefit, but it's very expensive.... [We] don't have the resources to get that kind of training" (INT: ET: 336 - 339). Kelly also displayed her interest in an educator she knows at the Regional Service Center who just recently left a district with a translation department. Enviously (RJ), Kelly stated, "If they needed something translated in her school in Kansas, they just sent it down and they had a whole translation department. They had several languages. Well, when you have those kinds of resources, you can do things like that" (INT: ET: 342 - 345).

Lydia mentioned the need for teachers learning more Spanish, using language programs such as Rosetta Stone, and having more access to English-Spanish dictionaries in the classrooms (INT: HE: 39). She also suggested the need for a language lab equipped with technology for listening and viewing as a part of learning.

> It'd probably be a better learning tool for them [Latino students] because the 55 minutes you have in class [is not enough] ...It's just I think reading the language, writing the

> language, and then hearing it. I think it makes a bigger difference as far as being able to put the three together. (INT: HE: 164 - 168)

Much of the literature indicated that adequate access to resources poses a problem in smaller school districts, hence inhibiting struggling language learners (Spears, et al., 1990; Wrigley, 2000). In conclusion, the ESL teacher summarized a dichotomous situation:

> I think this school district is doing the best they can do with what they have. Yeah, it could be better, but ultimately, the teachers do the best they can do with the administrators, the kids—everybody does the best they can do with the resources. (INT: ET: 347 - 350)

Training - *We need more!*

Numerous teachers interviewed exhibited concerns for the lack of training they had been offered or in which they had participated. The types of training they desired, whether culturally or academically related, was rarely specified.

The research literature suggests that many teachers enter schools without proper training teaching culturally diverse populations, posing a major challenge (Berg-Tilton et al., 1996). Although teachers may possess ideologies that all students can learn, it is difficult to grasp culturally responsive practices that may be hindered by the teachers' own cultural background (Dilworth & Brown, 2001). Therefore, schools must provide teachers with the motivation and resources to successfully respond to differing needs of diverse learners (Spears et al., 1990). When asked what training was being implemented to meet the needs and strengths of Latino students, some staff members could not recall any, and one said, " . . . I'm not really aware specifically . . ." (INT: HE: 97). When asked, Jenny replied, shaking her head sadly (RJ):

> None that I know of. None. Absolutely none. I was a part of just a research group [Sunset Review Committee] a year or two ago where we [tried] to get a review of what we offered for [our ESL students] and how we could better direct our efforts, but there has been no training, nothing that would culturally or socially or give you an awareness of any of that. None. (INT: ST1: 164 - 167)

Whether or not training had been offered, it obviously did not make an impression on Jenny. She seemed sincerely concerned that the school lacked in this area of professional development (RJ).

Some teachers alluded that they were not aware of training because it was unnecessary for them to be trained on meeting needs of Latino student learners.

> You know, I'm not aware of that [training] because in my field, I don't have to address that [diverse learners]. So I don't know what all. I'm sure there is some. Well, there's something this summer dealing with needs of the ESL teachers. My training with teachers, but nothing ever came of that again, which is a shame, but…I don't think much, really. (INT: ST2: 157 -161)

Three types of training emerged from the conversations with staff members regarding the need for more professional development: instructional, cultural sensitivity, and learning Spanish.

Instructional

The ESL teacher, Kelly, remarked that since ELLs were no longer being pulled out of classrooms to see her, more teacher training on inclusion was vital; Latino learners "need teachers who are trained to work with them in how to meet their needs" (INT: ET: 128) because the students are "…not going to be pulled out like they have been. That's what the legislature is moving toward…" (INT: ET: 130 - 132). Kelly summarized:

> ELLS are going to be in their classrooms getting all of their instruction. They're not going to come out for assistance on a regular basis. They'll just come in on an as-needed thing, and so the teachers are going to have more responsibility as far as making sure those kids learn the material. So [teachers need] training on how to adjust their teaching to make sure those kids get the information. (INT: ET: 263 - 268)

Kelly then described that teacher training should entail "direct," "intense," and "ongoing" sessions on how to meet the instructional needs of struggling English language learners. In addition to assessment strategies, teachers need training regarding "…the best teaching methods, the best presentation of materials" (INT: ET: 62 - 65). Demonstrating concern that teachers are not prepared to meet the needs and strengths of Latino students in an inclusion class, Kelly

elaborated:

> [Teachers need] training on what is required within their subject for ELL students because that is going to be part of their TEKS...I go to tons of workshops on ELL strategies in writing and reading and math, and we need more [for] regular ed teachers… the kids are going to be in their classrooms, and …I'll just be in the rooms with them assisting. …they don't have enough training because this school has never had to deal with…such a large [non English speaking] population in their regular classrooms…. (INT: ET: 249 - 259)

Earlier, when specifying examples of training that the school was currently implementing, staff frequently mentioned the recent SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) training in which they had participated. In the first semester of training, SIOP formatted lesson plans were required of all teachers; in the second, learning protocols were to be displayed in all classrooms. Nevertheless, some also reported that although elements of SIOP were being executed throughout the school, it was not enough.

Kelly confirmed again that SIOP was implemented but whispered with a smile (as if she did not want others to hear) (RJ), "…it needs to be more intense and revisited" (INT: ET: 230). She continued, "…we did do that…. At least that gave them [teachers]…you know, they know what it is and what they're supposed to be doing, trying to do with the kids to help them be more successful in the classroom" (INT: ET: 230 - 233). Kelly seemed to "settle" for the training's implementation, even though she did not sound confident that it was sufficient (RJ). To her, she understood that although teachers had received the SIOP training, their implementation of it was spotty, at best. Currently, teachers consistently employ a few of the SIOP components (e.g., preparation and building background), but they have not been trained nor are they using all eight SIOP components.

Making the quotation mark gesture with her fingers (RJ), Kelly implied that she and the other district ESL teacher have "offered" additional trainings, but not all teachers have taken

advantage of them. The aforementioned comments from the ESL teacher insinuate that although trainings were available, it was not to the extent that she would like to see them implemented, nor were all teachers taking them seriously.

Judy commented that she attended a workshop at the Regional Service Center that addressed learning strategies for struggling English language learners. Impressed with the training, she would like to see a similar workshop conducted at EHS.

> I would like to see that brought to our whole staff, and I would also like to see something arranged so that maybe [the two district ESL teachers] could give the staff like a training, too—maybe not in the detail that they've been trained, but just some starting points that people could be aware of. (INT: GC: 106 - 110)

In recent years, Eagle High School teachers and staff have participated in the trainings the school has offered such as intermittent professional development provided by the district ESL instructors and Sheltered Observation Instruction Protocol. In addition, teachers occasionally seek training opportunities from the Regional Service Center. However, many would like to learn more on effective methods and strategies that better instructed English language learners or would appreciate professional development for diverse learners that was specific to the content area for which they were responsible.

Cultural sensitivity

In a survey teacher conducted in 2007 – 08, EHS staff members were asked to rank different professional development topics that they would like to see infused into teacher training. Out of the ten topics presented, *cultural sensitivity* ranked third behind *technology* and *higher order thinking skills*. Obviously, many teachers felt that training in the area of cultural sensitivity needed more of the faculty's attention. However, the school has not offered any training particularly in this area.

Jenny, who earlier could not recall any types of training that had been offered by the

school or district, expressed the need for additional staff training on cultural sensitivity. She was one of a handful of teachers who remarked that this type of training was crucial. She shared, "[Meeting] the needs [of Latino learners] will be based on an increase in numbers and really trying to direct attention on cultural awareness and the social struggles [of the students]. The faculty [needs to know] the backgrounds of that population" (INT: ST1: 228 - 230).

Jenny was emphatic that teachers should know more about the lives of the students they teach, believing that teachers should also share with one another their students' backgrounds without violating privacy rights or confidentiality.

> ...I mean obviously not telling them [teachers], "That person isn't documented," or "That one's not a resident," but within the ability to share that we're no different than other districts that have students that have been through these struggles, and what can we do to set ourselves apart and to be good human beings, to say, "You know what? These kids, they've been through it. And really, they're part of our future. They're our future." (INT: ST1: 170 - 174)

Coach Kyle spoke with sincerity referring to the school's need for more culturally related training (RJ). "I think maybe more of a cultural training would be good, you know? Just telling us to do lesson plans—if you don't understand the culture, you don't know how to interact" (INT: GE: 189 - 190). He continued to candidly share a personal story of his life growing up with Latino friends (RJ):

> I grew up in West Texas and so a lot of my best friends were Latino. In fact, my best friend all the way through junior high was Latino, and so I'd spend the night at his house or he'd spend the night at my house all the time. So I knew that culture already. If more people understood how that culture thinks as far as the importance of family and the things that they have, I think that would help. (INT: GE: 187 - 191)

Similarly, Jenny described her concerns:

> I would encourage our faculty to have some kind of awareness seminar. You know, every district should have an awareness or teacher development—you know, really knowing how these kids get here and what they're doing here and why they're here and how it's going to affect their education. (INT: ST1: 153 - 156)

Like Jenny and Kyle, educational researchers posit that teachers are oftentimes unprepared for cultural differences that await them in their classrooms (Brunn, 2002). As a result, teachers must be sensitive to other cultures, establishing a knowledge base of their backgrounds (Gay, 2000). Of all the teachers interviewed, only Kyle and Jenny alluded to the need for training in the area of cultural sensitivity and understanding students' backgrounds. However, some teachers did remark that they believed training in learning the Spanish language would be useful in their teaching.

Learning Spanish

Earlier in the text, both Lydia and Becky mentioned an after school training that had been offered to teachers who wished to learn Spanish. Lydia enjoyed her experience during the sessions and described the training as "more personal."

> I would like to see more of that. I can get more from that than I can from going off somewhere to a workshop. I mean, it was just more personal . . . I was more inclined to try to speak the language rather than with a group of strangers. (INT: HE: 122 - 124)

Working with peers to help understand a foreign language, she believed, helped teachers better understand an important feature of the Latino student population. A working knowledge of the Spanish language enabled teachers not only to better relate to students, but aided in communication within the learning environment.

Unfortunately, the training was short lived. Becky despondently shared (RJ), "My training [Spanish language instruction] with teachers…nothing ever came of that again, which is a shame…" (INT: ST2: 159 - 160). If providing Spanish language workshops or trainings is to be implemented with the intention of helping teachers learn the language, it needs to be offered in multiple, ongoing sessions. One-time workshops, especially in language, are simply not helpful pedagogy.

Resistance to Training – *I don't see any reason to make changes!*

Eagle High School teachers were asked whether or not the school had offered sufficient training to meet Latino students' strengths and needs. Unfortunately, many teachers could not recall any examples. However, as the data uncovers, EHS has offered training for struggling English learners; yet, it seems as though the trainings have not made much of an impact on all the staff members, nor has everyone taken them seriously.

As mentioned above, some identified SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) as a training that had been helpful; unfortunately, a few were resistant to its implementation. Kyle, the government/economics teacher shared, "I never had any Latino students that were struggling, and so they've always done well. So I don't see a reason to make changes if they're already doing well" (INT: GE: 163 - 164). He explained further (RJ):

> Of course we had SIOP. We did the SIOP, which I'm not going to pretend I really care about very much because I already—you know, like I said, already bringing mine in, so my selfishness or whatever, I was just like…Why do I need to do this when what I'm already doing [what] is working well for me? Why do I need to change something? (INT: GE: 143 - 147)

Kyle deemed it unnecessary to participate in a program that he thought did not apply to him, seeming frustrated with its implementation (RJ):

> I think I was just more resistant to somebody just coming in and structuring something for me when I already felt good about what I had structured for myself as far as throwing extra stuff into lesson plans. Any extra paperwork always irritates me, especially as a coach. You know coaches. We always-- Our time is kind of precious, and so anything that even looks like there's going to be more paperwork, we kind of put up a brick wall right off the bat. So that was kind of me. I kind of put up a brick wall just because I was like, "Oh, hell." (INT: GE: 152 - 157)

Kyle was obviously resistant to anything that was outside his normal classroom routine, perceiving the SIOP training as "just another workshop," not grasping the benefits it may yield for better serving ELLs and other struggling learners once implemented effectively.

Besides SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol), another teacher replied that professional development needed to focus on teachers acting in a professional way as opposed to specialized trainings to work with Latino learners. "…Those are the kinds of trainings that we need to have rather than how to teach a certain group of people" (INT: MT: 11 - 12). The arguments for these beliefs were supported by the notion, "I don't even like tracking subgroups of people statistically" (INT: MT: 13 - 14). Conversely, the math teacher saw no need for professional development training that might address the strengths and needs of a particular population because, in his eyes, he treats everyone the same.

LACK OF STUDENT SUPPORT

Teachers at Eagle High School understood a lack of sustained teacher and instructional support in the school's response to the changing Latino population. In some instances, they understood there to be no instructional support at all. Resources and training are essential elements that they feel are missing that *indirectly* affect Latino students. A more direct lack of support of Latino students can lead to students' feeling isolated in the school environment which is indicated in the literature. Research surrounding Latino students' experiences of isolation purported that small schools have tendencies to be impersonalized, therefore enhancing students' potential of feeling isolated (Shoho & Petrisky, 1996). This counters other research that contended that small, rural schools provide more personal attention and a sense of community (Boyd & Fitzgibbons, 1993) as well as more visible adult–child linkages (Spear, Oliver, & Maes, 1990).

At Eagle High School, the small school setting provides an opportunity for teachers to know more students in the school and to know them well. In spite of this reality, teachers and staff shared their thoughts regarding a lack of support for Latino students in the areas of

understanding backgrounds, socialization, instruction, and cultural sensitivity.

Understanding Backgrounds – *If they just understood…*

The research found that Eagle High School lacks in responding to Latino students' cultural, emotional, and social needs. Prevalent in the participants' responses was their recognition of a *lack of understanding* of student backgrounds and cultures; many also conveyed their thoughts on how to better respond. The counselor, Judy, remarked that Latino students need peer and emotional support "…so that they can make that transition [into high school] because it is difficult to do it when you're pretty much thrown into a school curriculum that's not in your native language" (INT: GC: 26 - 29). Judy recognized the difficulty for non-English speakers to transition into an all-English high school. Empathetically, she continued explaining why she believes teachers should be more sensitive to their Latino students' backgrounds.

> I really feel that if more of us were more knowledgeable and sensitive to where they're coming from, we could meet their needs better and communicate better and could—I hate to keep using that phrase "bridge the gap," but do that. Sometimes [the students'] lack of progress is read as a lack of intelligence and it's not that at all. It's just a lack of language. (INT: GC: 124 - 127)

Because they are not aware of Latino student backgrounds, many teachers do not understand that some students have not been exposed to certain activities that are unique to a particular society. Jenny passionately illustrates the primary needs of the Latino students:

> … for the faculty and administration to get a better concept of what the social struggles and the elements under that umbrella, what they actually are facing because it's easy to just say, "You know what? This group of kids, all ninth graders are going to take this activity or do this one activity." Well, there are a lot of different things that you may run up against if you're socially inept or haven't been exposed to some of the things. Doing something as simple as the Pledge of Allegiance—if you've never been explained that we stand, you know, that it's a patriotic thing, somebody else may find it offensive that you've never been exposed to that. I really think it starts out with the faculty and staff and administration setting the standard of embracing. (INT: ST1: 71 - 78)

Furthermore, Jenny, who felt that she relates more to Latino students' backgrounds compared to

her colleagues, has found herself entrenched in their personal lives. Her own family was one of the first Latino families in town; now she supports many of the Latino families who have recently moved to River Town. Passionately, she illustrated why she does not believe that EHS staff fully understands some of the Latino student backgrounds. Her understanding of those backgrounds is steeped in the immigrant experience of some of the students.

> …I don't know that they're as understanding of the background, the differences, and the struggles [to get] to River Town. I think that if you explained some of those things then you have a different outlook on somebody's academics in school because it really affects everything. You know, they've seen and heard and been exposed to things you can't imagine. I think as educators, if you're faculty, if you know that, then you have the different appreciation of what it takes, the effort it takes to come to school and to really encourage them that this is a safe environment. It's okay to come and learn and to want to learn and to not degrade them. I don't know that I've ever seen that, but I think it gives you a different appreciation…. (INT: ST1: 142 - 152)

Kyle agreed it is important that educators understand more about the lives of the students they teach. "If more people understood how that culture thinks as far as the importance of family and the things that they have, I think that would help" (INT: GE: 190 - 191).

One teacher's response revealed that some Eagle High School teachers do not understand Latino students' backgrounds when he was unable to fully respond to the question: what are the needs of the school's Latino student population?

> From what I understand, just talking to other teachers, listening to other teachers talk among themselves and then what I saw this year in our flex days because you know, I saw about 90 students for each one of those ten days. Most of them were students that I have not seen before, and a high percentage of those students were Latino. So based on what I've overheard from other teachers and what I saw from those students, I believe that our Latino students need…uh… They need um… They need to want an education a little bit more. (INT: MT: 7 - 12)

Clearly, this honors teacher was stumped by the question, but his response showed similarities to those teachers who believed that they did not need to learn about the backgrounds of their students in a special way because they believed "everyone was the same." Responses such as

these are supported by the research of Howard (1999) who expressed "…too often we expect white teachers to be what they have not learned to be namely, multicultural competent people" (p. 4). The avoidance of seeing color, ignoring students' racial and ethnic differences, limits teachers' abilities to meet diverse learners needs (Ladson-Billings, 1994) and thus leads to *color blindness* (Howard, 1999, Nieto, 1999).

Although the Eagle High School Campus Improvement Plan is embedded with support for Latino students and their teachers instructionally, there is not evidence in the report that cites programs or professional development that would enable teachers to learn more about Latino students' backgrounds or culture. Similarly, as school board agendas and minutes were analyzed over the last year, nowhere in the scripts was evidence of the high school or district supporting Latino students' backgrounds or culture. Only instructional needs were cited in the Campus Improvement Plan, school board agendas, and school board minutes.

Socialization – *Feeling a part of everything…*

A number of teachers expressed that a significant need of Latino students was to help them with socialization in the school environment. Coach Kyle noted the importance of getting students involved and helping them find "something to do" and "a sense of worth and importance" (INT: GE: 45 - 46). He has noticed the school trying to start meeting needs and cites the ESL program as an example. However, Coach Kyle stated, " I don't know that we've gone far enough to try to find activities for them to get involved in…You know, I think we could do a better job … to make them feel more a part of everything" (INT: GE: 72 - 74).

In addition, Kelly mentioned that the school needed a "…newcomers program," for students just entering the school system to help them adjust. Kelly envisions a program designed to immerse non-English speakers in the English language upon entering the high school,

additionally providing social and emotional support to students and their families. Unfortunately, "Lots of schools have trouble providing that" (INT: ESL: 103 - 104). At this time, EHS has not discussed future plans to implement such a program.

Becky, the Spanish teacher, believed that Latino students within the high school need "a sounding board and support, too." She listened to students talk amongst one another and reflected:

> They were brought here and it's been a struggle. Most want to return to Mexico…. They don't feel comfortable in the United States. There are too many negatives in front of them, so they don't know where they stand and yet, what do you do when a child is illegal and you can't-- What options do they have? They can't go to college. You know, it's sad. They're stuck. (INT: ST1: 89 - 92)

Based on conversations with students and teachers, Becky concluded that many Latino students desired to return to Mexico because of the challenges they face in the U.S. (RJ), believing that students are often "stuck" with few options after high school. In addition, the perception that some of the students are illegal is not completely false; based on students who do not have a social security number and whose parents are unable to provide a driver's license, the principal perceives that approximately half of the school's Latino students are currently undocumented. However, these numbers are less than some of the teachers' assumptions that most of the Latino students are illegal immigrants.

Instructionally – Need a variety of teaching methods

Many teachers shared several concerns regarding what they believed Latino students lacked academically. Many commented on teaching and learning strategies that they could implement more fully within their classrooms. "They [Latino students] need a variety of teaching methods—you know, multi-sensory learning…" (INT: ESL: 99 - 100).

During the interviews, some of the teachers admitted to teaching practices they could

implement more often in the classrooms. When conversing with the Home Economics teacher, Lydia, regarding culturally responsive teaching in the classroom, she pondered, "Well, actually now that I think about it, it brings to mind that I have not implemented as much as I should have or could have….in the foods, that's something I can improve on" (INT: HE: 195 - 197). From her prior experience in a predominantly Latino school she reminisced, "I learned a lot from the students because I allowed them to cook. There was the recipe; they could do it in their—[language]. And I learned a lot from them. So I think probably we could do a little bit more of that. Mm-hmm [yes], absolutely" (INT: HE: 197 - 201).

Some teachers suggested that Latino students struggle because of the language barrier. They commented that students who initially do not know the language should be placed in intense English classes before entering other subject area classrooms. Kelly retorted, "If they're new to the United Sates…to the English language, I think they need to have intense English for a period of time…" (INT: ESL: 100 - 103).

Kyle agreed that "…the English-learning Spanish population…need[s] to be engulfed in learning English more before they start into the school system because you're not going to get all your teachers to speak Spanish" (INT: GE: 221 - 223). Others indicated that it was not only difficult for the English language learning students, but a hardship for teachers who were instructing them as well. Kyle continued:

> If you have two or three students in a classroom that can't speak English, it's a hardship truthfully on the teacher and the rest of the students, and it's a hardship on those kids because they're trying their best to [communicate]. They're not going to be able to keep up if they can't understand what you're saying. So they need to learn English before they're thrown into history and algebra and all [the other subjects]. So I think that needs to happen personally just for their own sake as well as everybody else's. (INT: GE: 221 - 231)

The math teacher adamantly held this same belief (RJ):

> When Latino students first come into this country, if they cannot speak English, I think they need to go into an intensive study of English before they are placed out in mathematics and science classes and those kinds of classes. I mean it's asinine to me to think that you have non-English speaking students mixed in with English speaking students and you have one teacher that basically has to teach two different subjects there. If you have to teach the math and English to one group and then spend the other half of the period teaching the math and Spanish to another group, I just don't think that that's an efficient way to do it, and I don't think it's fair to the Latino students and it's certainly not fair to the teacher. (INT: MT: 302 - 309)

The school counselor, Judy, shared that she "believed in the immersion model for learning a new language" (INT: GC: 25), and although the school was instituting such a model, additional support was needed for more effective implementation. She adds, "We need to have some support in place instructionally...because it is difficult to do it when you're pretty much thrown into a school curriculum that's not in your native language" (INT: GC: 26 - 29).

Regarding writing in English, the Spanish teacher noticed that many students struggle in this regard, especially when it came to constructing a multi-sentence response. "It's all one big paragraph, no punctuation. I see frustration from their level" (INT: ST2: 32). She suggested that time needed to be spent "dictating sentences" so that struggling English learners understand the concept of writing a complete sentence.

> That was something that just Bella[12] can't take. It's the strangest thing. So that doesn't sound right, but it's just that she cannot form sentences. She can speak no problem, but it's one of those things. She cannot form a sentence…. (INT: ST2: 46 - 51)

Lastly, the math honors teacher, Danny, exhibited concern that few Latino students have entered his upper level classes.

> I haven't seen increasing numbers of Latinos in my classes. I don't know. I wish I would, but I teach upper level, honors-type classes. Maybe the language barrier has made some students a little hesitant to come into these classes. I don't know. But I wish I had more. I wish I had more. (INT: MT: 25 – 28)

Interestingly, when addressing how to meet Latino students' needs instructionally, the

[12] Pseudonym

majority of staff members attributed their struggles to a language barrier. This is obviously an area of great concern within EHS that requires serious attention. However, not all Latino students are English language learners who may have other instructional needs that fall outside the realm of learning English.

Uncertainty and Frustration - *What are their needs ands strengths?*

As I continued conversations with Eagle High School staff members, it became apparent that they were deeply perplexed about how to address diversity within the school. Part of the non-response and lack of support seemed to be a product of not understanding what to do next. Lacking in the literature regarding school reform, schools have difficulties understanding and responding to challenges they face (Levin, 1994). Many teachers in today's educational institutions facing diversity issues are overwhelmed (McNeil, 1996) and baffled how to find solutions, especially in rural schools (Wrigley, 2000).

Her voice latent with disappointment (RJ), Jenny shared that her school is uncertain how to meet the needs and strengths of Latino students. She posed these questions on behalf of the students she wanted to help succeed, "What are their weaknesses? What are their strengths? What is it that we can focus on to help these kids?" (INT: ST2: 210 - 211).

Previously, Principal Kathy admitted that she did not believe that EHS was fully meeting Latino students' strengths and needs; however, she stated, "I think we know what some of the needs are; we just don't really know exactly how to help those kids" (INT: PRIN: 226 - 227). She elaborated that the students are identified, but it was apparent in her words and expression she was at a loss of what to do next (RJ). "We just still are not sure about what are some programs or strategies-- what are some things that we can do to make a differences with those kids—[strategies that] we have not done before?" (INT: PRIN: 235 - 236).

The frustration is evident when Principal Kathy referenced the unfairness of struggling English learners completing a system that allowed them to complete all required coursework, but were unable to obtain a diploma because they have not passed TAKS requirements. She facetiously posed the question, "So ultimately what are we doing to meet their needs? We're letting them get through and pass all those courses and they get really nothing out of it and that's not fair" (INT: PRIN: 125 - 127). Principal Kathy was slow in her response, tinged with frustration that students limited in their English speaking ability were expected to pass high stakes state tests before they could receive a high school diploma (RJ).

Faced with challenge

The administrators and teachers at Eagle High School recognized that they face many challenges for which they may not be entirely prepared. Principal Kathy expressed:

> I think identifying the needs of the kids, sometimes some of those ESL students are not [strong academically] in their home language in writing and reading as well, and that makes it difficult for them… So it's just trying to identify their needs [and respond to them], and it's a huge challenge for the district. (INT: PRIN: 38 – 40)

Some frustration stemmed from Eagle High School confronting challenges that makes the school unique from other school districts. Principal Kathy explained that it was difficult to research other schools experiencing the increasing demographics because few schools have undergone the same change. Some schools that are small in size may have the same percentage, but then possess fewer students for teachers and the ESL instructor to monitor and instruct. However, schools that are larger with similar percentages have the capabilities of instituting a true bi-lingual program. Principal Kathy continued to clarify:

> We're a large AA and a small AAA. We're just right in the middle. If we had more [Spanish speaking students], then we would be large enough to have a true bilingual program, and that's what the big schools and the larger AAAA schools [are able to] do. They feed those kids into bilingual programs, and then when they become more proficient in English, then they go to another level. Since we don't have so many, we put

> those kids in an ESL program, and that's not really completely what they need. (INT: PRIN: 129 - 134)

Throughout her commentary, Principal Kathy repeatedly proclaimed, "It's not fair… it's an injustice…." Frustrated because students are expected to take state tests after being in Texas for a short period of time, Principal Kathy continued to seek answers to alleviate the challenges her school is experiencing.

While many teachers and administrators seemed to be comfortable voicing concerns and frustrations, it is important to recognize the conversations I had with staff members *after* the recorder was turned off. At that time, even more evidence of frustration, confusion, and helplessness transpired (RJ).

What is culturally responsive teaching, really?

Ladson-Billings (1994) affirmed that students' valuable knowledge must be incorporated into the classroom regularly as well as in the curriculum and instructional practices**.** In culturally responsive teaching practices, student diversity is at the core of lessons and units of instruction, necessitating not only the examination of students' needs, but their strengths as well (Ladson-Billings, 1993). Additionally, Gay (2000) describes culturally responsive teaching as centering "classroom instruction in *multiethnic cultural frames of reference*" (p. xix). Researchers emphasized that it is the *way* educators teach that impacts how students perceive the content and respond to it; ultimately, their learning hinges upon culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1993; Villegas & Luca, 2002).

Faculty members were approached with the question, "What is culturally responsive teaching and how is it implemented in your class room?" Although several teachers provided a basic understanding of cultural responsive teaching, their responses often lacked depth and nuanced expression. Many teachers thought deeply about the question before they responded; some struggled with their answers, and others were without response (RJ).

Only a few teachers cited the need to connect teaching and learning with an understanding of students' backgrounds, culture, and heritage. For instance, Kelly explained that culturally responsive teachers:

> …understand the kids' needs, making sure that they are sensitive to that student's culture and then providing them instruction meet those needs but always keeping their background and where they're coming from in the front of their mind so that they don't offend or they don't expect them to do things that they're not capable or culturally taught to do. (INT: ET: 288 - 302)

As an example, Kelly discussed how she combines her culture with her students during class:

> We talk about Latino culture, mostly Mexican because most of my kids are from Mexico, and one from Columbia. We discuss culture a lot. I talk about my culture as a Texan American, and I feel like I am sensitive to their culture and I let them share and they feel proud about their culture. Then I share with them ours, which hopefully makes them feel less threatened about learning English. I think it's great that…how tied together we are, how their culture, especially in Mexico and Texas, how everything is tied together. And they respond to that, I think. (INT: ET: 311 - 318)

Again, Coach Kyle provided a similar response, describing culturally responsive teaching as "having an appreciation for other cultures, knowing that not everybody does the same thing you do" and "not being judgmental towards other people and the way they do things" (INT: GE: 285-286, 292-293). He continued to explain:

> You know, I don't have to agree with their culture, but I do need to be sensitive to the fact that it is their culture… I should make sure and not do anything to make them feel bad about their culture…if they feel like I'm judgmental of their home life, their family, their culture, I've already lost them. (INT: GE: 286 - 292)

Some teachers struggled and attempted to define culturally responsive teaching by offering examples:

> ….So you have to be, sensitive to where [Latino students] come from and be aware of the role of women in their society and the role of men. At times it's not cultural-- Even in Japan if you have a girl, you're not going to want to answer questions as readily as a boy would, so you have to be aware of their culture and not try to impose our culture on them as much but have them realize what our culture is like…. (INT: ST2: 242-245)

A few teachers referenced how they enhanced the classroom with culturally relevant

material and activities. For instance, Becky decorates her room with Spanish historical figures and characters such as Don Quixote and Cervantes and hangs the flags of the different Spanish countries.

The home economics teachers discussed how the use of foods can contribute to culturally responsive practices in her classroom and add to the learning experiences of all children:

> It gives them a chance to try new things, different things because even within the Latino community, there are a lot of different cooking methods, seasonings. There are different combinations of foods, and just about any culture, you could implement. I mean whether it's dance or their dress, art, it could be implemented within a lesson. Even the architecture, interior design—I mean there's just a lot of influence there that you could use that could be implemented into your lessons. (INT: HE: 183 - 190)

However, when asked how she implemented "new and different things" at Eagle High School, she admitted that she had not implemented as much she would have liked and needed to do more. Such was the case for other respondents; some were not able to specifically identify culturally responsive practices they implemented within the classroom.

A few teachers were under the impression that cultural sensitivity and culturally responsive teaching practices could not be implemented in other classrooms because of their own narrow perception of what it entails. Becky believed, "that's not possible in another class to be that sensitive to their cultures, so foreign language, you are more sensitive to their cultures" (INT: ST2: 252 - 254).

One teacher claimed that cultural sensitivity was "understanding that races of people have differences," but then contends, "I don't think sensitivity, cultural sensitivity means that we lower expectations for certain groups because of differences in culture or differences in background, whatever, but we need to understand that those differences exist" (INT: MT: 323 - 327). This teacher understood that differences must be accounted for, but was very careful to ascertain that cultural differences cannot be used as an excuse for not learning. "That's what

cultural sensitivity is. It's understanding about differences, but it's not placing limitations on people because of differences" (INT: MT: 341 - 342).

The math teacher recalled what he believed to be an example of culturally responsive teaching when he had an Asian student in his honors classroom who did not always understand some of the analogies he used with students:

> I have to understand that if I'm trying to paint a picture using an analogy from something that I may have cut out of the American culture or American history then I have to understand that [girl's name] is not going to get that. So I have to help her get it in another way and use a different tool than what I would use for maybe some of the students that have lived in America for all their lives and they may have heard the old saying since they were a child. But for me, that's the way it would show up in my classroom. (INT: MT: 356 - 372)

Ironically, this same teacher later claimed that he treated all students the same and did not see a difference in how they should be instructed. This will be a focus of more elaboration later in the chapter.

Only one teacher identified in better detail the complexity of culturally responsive teaching. Jenny's idea of culturally responsive teaching means to "validate every culture."

> Any subject, any classroom that can somehow promote cultural awareness, sensitivity, and with all those, within that huge umbrella of maybe gender differences, religious differences, traditions, dress, economics, and all those things that play into somebody's culture—somehow connecting all those things, or not even connecting all of them, but any element that you can of anybody's culture and really showing an appreciation for those things. (INT: ST1: 190 - 195)

While teachers responded to questions about culturally responsive teaching, they noted the importance of understanding differences. However, not one staff member cited the importance of using a wide variety of instructional strategies that connect to different learning styles (Gay, 2000). As staff members were interviewed in their classrooms, only three teachers, the ESL and the two Spanish teachers, had evidence of culturally relative material on their walls (RJ). Another important characteristic missing from the conversations were teachers attributing

culturally responsive teaching to being socio-culturally conscious, seeing themselves as responsible for and capable of bringing about change to make schools more equitable (Villegas & Luca, 2002).

Research Question 2

What are the staff members' views, perceptions, and attitudes regarding the high school's Latino student population?

In an effort to convey a small, rural school's views, perceptions, and attitudes toward its Latino student population, inquiries were made concerning Eagle High School's diverse learners' strengths and needs. Additionally, faculty members were questioned about what they perceived to be the feelings of their colleagues. The educational success of children of color, as well as the preparation of all students in a diverse society, is affected by the attitudes that teachers hold toward race and culture (Trueba & Bartolome, 1997; Dilworth & Brown, 2001). Nieto (1999) attests, "Learning is not only affected by curriculum and pedagogical strategies, but also by the ideologies, behaviors, and attitudes of teachers" (p.1) and that "…Teachers attitudes and behavior towards students of different backgrounds can be significant factors on their learning" (p. 42). The following discussion unearths the study's findings of staff members' views, perceptions, and attitudes toward the Latino student population at Eagle High School.

Three particular questions that extracted the views, perceptions, and attitudes of teachers were:

- *What are the strengths of the Latino population within your school?*
- *What are your feelings toward the Latino student population?*
- *What do you perceive to be the feelings of your colleagues?*

Furthermore, additional distinctive themes emerged as a result of faculty members'

responses. Eagle High School teachers and staff possessed attitudes of respect, care, and empathy toward their Latino students. In addition, they held the perceptions that the language barrier inhibited student success and that some Latino students are resistant to education. Lastly, some teachers portrayed views of colorblindness as well as indifference and unawareness of school endeavors.

STUDENT STRENGTHS

First, Eagle High School faculty members were asked the question: *What are the strengths of the Latino population within your school?* Overall, teachers were complimentary of their students, enthusiastically sharing various responses (RJ). Some teachers were at a loss for words, not knowing where to begin, bouncing from one strength to another (RJ). "So I think it's… Oh, what is a strength? They want-- There's some-- How do you talk about all of them at one time?" (INT: ST2: 71 - 72). Teachers responded to the question by identifying strengths such as unity, loyalty, courage, and working hard, as well as identifying their perception of an additional strength lying in the sheer increase in numbers of Latino students at the school. The following discussion reveals the strengths of EHS's Latino students as professed by the staff.

Unified

A few teachers spoke of the Latino students' unity and support for each another, one describing a strength as "social" which encourages students to "mingle some" (INT: ST2: 72). Lydia portrayed, "…their strengths are that within that population, they're very supportive of each other. They will help each other with schoolwork. They're very close" (INT: HE: 45 - 46). Compared to other student groups, Lydia perceived that the Latino girls specifically seemed to always wait on one another outside the bathroom or in the cafeteria. Later, she concluded, "...the unity within that population is a good thing…" (INT: HC: 47 - 48).

Sense of Loyalty

Another prevailing attribute identified by faculty members was Latino students' sense of loyalty to their teachers, family, and friends. One teacher's observation was that the Latino students at Eagle High School tended to be very loyal once trust was established. Kyle expressed, " I think their strengths are that when they buy in to what you're doing, if they really believe that you're out for their good and you care about them, they are a more loyal type student" (INT: GE: 51 - 53). Kyle described some of the Latino students he knew as the "most respectful, the hardest-working" students in his class, sharing an example of a student that he felt that once he "won over," the student showed him respect:

> Jesse would give Michaels[13] just all kinds of trouble, just wore Michaels out, and the year before I had Jesse, I punished him all the time for stuff he did in Michaels's class. I always had him doing lines or stuff in the gym because he's always messing around. Well, I got Jesse this year and since day one, even before last year when I had him on the football team, we've always been pretty tight, and he's just always respected and bought into what I'm doing. He was my best student in seventh period class. He made A's and B's and always did his work. I thought, "Man, Jesse's [must be] a lot different in class than he is out in the field. I've got to be ready for him," but he was great. So I think if they buy into you and they believe that you have their best interest at heart that they're going to work hard and be a little bit more loyal than some of the others because some of my white students are great for me out on the field but then still kind of a pain in the classroom. (INT: GE: 53 - 66)

Speaking from her own beliefs as a Latina, another teacher shared her "…general experience with the Latin community" as a whole, noticing that a great strength in the "…Latino community has been their dedication, their loyalty" (INT: ST1: 93 - 94). She continued to explain that the Latino population possesses all the traits necessary "…that really make a good, strong community person," being very involved in their child's education:

> So it's really you know, their commitment to having an opportunity, hard-working, ethical—They want to be informed of a child's conduct and being valued and being appreciated for what they potentially could offer. I think that the Latin community definitely has an appreciation for education. (INT: SP1: 94 – 97)

[13] Pseudonym for EHS teacher

Jenny affirmed that these same traits were inherited by their children and were reflected in Latino students' work ethic at school.

Sharing Culture

Like Gay (2000), several staff members believed that a strength lies in Latino students' innate ability to bring their culture to school. Some teachers' appreciation for this attribute was heartfelt and passionate (RJ). One teacher explained, "…they bring diversity to the school and it's good to get a different perspective on things (INT: HC: 48 - 49). Another divulged, "They bring to us another culture that broadens our horizons" (INT: GC: 33). And the ESL teacher explained, "They contribute information about the culture. In the two classes that I go into, they're both history classes. They contribute information about Latino culture and history" (INT: ESL: 113 - 115). These teachers exhibited a sincere respect for students' culture; therefore, as Ladson-Billings (1994) contends, by responding appropriately to the cultures of students, their academic experience is enhanced.

Eager to Learn

Some staff members illustrated their perceptions that another major strength was Latino students' eagerness to learn and desire to better their lives:

> For the most part, I feel that they are here because they want to be here. They are very eager learners, and that's refreshing. That's good. They're trying to better themselves and their families want them to better themselves, and I do think that for the great vast majority of the time that is accomplished. (INT: GC: 33–36)

Another teacher shared the same opinion:

> Their enthusiasm, their--and I'm going to play on my strong ones that are motivated that want to learn and assimilate into the student population here-- yeah, their desire to learn. I've got three right now that just like, "Give me more." They want to learn more and more and more. (INT: ESL: 111 - 113)

To better describe Latino students' eagerness to learn, one teacher offered an example of a

particular student who has excelled, describing her as "top notch" and added that "…for coming so far from nothing, she takes it seriously. So I think most are trying to do the best they can" (INT: ST2: 72 –79). Knowing that this young lady had a difficult home situation, Becky praised her constant efforts at school. A smattering of teachers spoke of admiration for what they perceived to be Latino students' self-motivation and desire to achieve despite challenges they face.

Great Courage

A couple of teachers expressed amazement at their Latino students' ability to overcome the hardships that some have faced; teachers attributed them with courage to enter classrooms were they may not know the language. "So I think that's a strength, that they can overcome that…" (INT: ESL: 119). And another teacher pondered, "…Their strengths. For them to come to a foreign school and know that they're going to have to be there, I think that they have courage to come to school every day and try as best as they can…"(INT: ST2: 71 - 72). Likewise, the math teacher perceived that Latino students have strength because "They have probably seen maybe some harder times than a lot of our white students and generally if folks have to experience hard times, it makes them stronger" (INT: MT: 68 - 69).

Working Hard

Some of the Eagle High School teachers characterized Latino students as being hard working. Coach Kyle maintained that his Latino students were "…the hardest-working ones I have in class" (INT: GE: 55). Jenny, as well, described students as "hardworking" and "ethical" (INT: SP1: 95-96). The ESL teacher expressed, "They show the other kids that they're working with a language issue and they're still outperforming students who have been here all their lives who are native English speakers" (INT: ET: 113 - 118).

Additionally, another teacher made the assumption that Latino learners' strengths *should* be hardworking, basing his assumption on what he perceived of their parents:

> They should understand the benefits of hard work because I think their parents have had to work hard, but for the most part, that's been hardwork physically, manual labor. Many of them you would think would be willing to work hard as well if they could just see school as a job that if they would work very hard at that job, then it would pay huge dividends for the rest of their lives. So I would think that one strength would be they come from a culture of hard work. (INT: MT: 66 - 70)

Strength in Numbers

One teacher interpreted the question about strengths of the Latino student population at Eagle High School by emphasizing their growing numbers:

> I think the strength is just growing immensely, and it's going to be the influence…. I think that the strengths are the numbers, that the Latin community, the Latino community is in their numbers, and they're definitely a force that you want to educate and promote social well-being. (INT: ST1: 83 – 88)

All in all, the teacher above believed that as the diverse learning population increases, so will the need for the educational community to respond to the strengths of the students.

STAFF MEMBERS' FEELINGS

Eagle High School faculty members were also presented with the question: *What are your feelings toward the Latino student population?* This inquiry also revealed views, perceptions, and attitudes of EHS staff members. Similar to student strengths, the interviews unveiled predominantly amiable reactions from staff members. The responses to "What are your feelings..." ranged from *concern* to *positive* to *subjective* to *no difference*.

Concern

First, the veteran Spanish teacher portrayed great concern and sympathized with her Latino students' backgrounds.

> My feelings are positive feelings toward them. Concern. I feel like it's not an easy road for them. Their parents brought them here, so they have a lot on their plate that a lot of

> teachers don't realize. I don't think it's an easy home life for many, so you have to just take all that into consideration. (INT: ST2: 123 - 125)

Several other staff members' commentary throughout the interviews was latent with worry for the Latino student population. Some of the underlying concerns involved students passing TAKS and obtaining a diploma (PRIN), acclimating to the school environment (ET), and having their culture and backgrounds considered and respected (ST1).

Positive and Receptive

Another teacher reflected that he had always had positive experiences with Latino students despite other teachers' past reactions to negative behaviors. He shares, "Well, my feelings are very positive. You know like I said with mine, I've had all just positive [experiences] you know-- Even with ones that have been classified or labeled as maybe troublemakers…(INT: GE: 95 - 98).

Regardless of which students were labeled as "troublemakers," Kyle believed that they did well in his class. He added, "I had a good relationship with them, so I have just a positive opinion and attitude about everything" (INT: GE: 97 - 100).

The new Spanish teacher, Jenny, who was born and raised in River Town, felt that she has more invested in the Latino population and expressed that her own background and culture draws her to care deeply for them (RJ). She articulates that she is "very receptive to them" and feels "like it's something I value. I'm very receptive to the needs, the sensitivity, to the families, to the social differences, the struggles, all those things. I can appreciate what they've been through" (INT: SP1: 134 - 136). Although Jenny is teaching at the high school for the first time, her previous role as Communities and Schools campus coordinator allowed her to work closely with the Latino students and families in River Town.

Living in the South Texas valley for over thirty years, educating predominantly Latino

students, the school counselor reflected on her past experiences and displayed genuine attachment both emotionally and socially to the Latino student community (RJ).

> I think I'm very steeped in that culture and very sympathetic to their needs and feelings and issues and maybe optimistically, I feel that relations between other cultures, specifically Latino and Anglo culture, are getting better. I think that's something that has to go both ways, and I'm sure doing my part to bridge that gap. (INT: GC: 73 - 79)

Similarly, when asked about her feelings for the Latino population, the principal announced, "it's a good thing," and then drew upon her life living in South Texas as well, illustrating her and her children's experiences that have influenced her personal feelings. She shared that when her and her family moved to River Town, "some of the cultural diversities and the comments that were sometimes made to Latino kids, my children took it very offensively and were protective of them" (INT: PRIN: 45 - 53). Principal Kathy articulated that her family's views were more positive and protective because they had lived in an area rich in the Latino culture.

Motivating Latino students to aspire to be successful students and citizens, the ESL teacher focused her positive feelings on her desire to do more for her students. Searching for the right words, the ESL teacher voiced, "My feelings toward them… My feeling is positive…" (INT: ESL: 154). Kelly continued that, like so many other students, some Latino students do not care for school, so she feels compelled to "make them more motivated" and "give them more opportunities and …tools to be successful" (INT: ESL: 154 - 63). Kelly re-emphasized her strong feelings for her ESL students by declaring that she "loves" them!

Subjective

Conversely from others, one teacher stated that her feelings were "subjective" toward the Latino student population, sharing her perception that they brought "variety" to the school. Afterwards, she followed with an example of what she perceived as negative behavior in

students' dress. "It reminds me more of the inner city population. From my particular background of inner city schools, it just um… I think dress affects behavior, and I think some of that is kind of negative" (INT: HC: 73 - 77). A teacher of color, Lydia's experiences of working with inner city students influenced her belief that certain types of clothing may affect student behavior in general**.**

No Difference

Only one teacher did not focus on positive aspects of the Latino students, stating that he felt, "No different than I feel toward any other—females, males, whites, Asians, or whatever else. There isn't any difference at all" (INT: MT: 141 - 142). He proceeded to digress from the question posed:

> I don't have a lot of empathy or tolerance for students that don't do what they're supposed to do, that don't take advantage of the opportunity for the education that they have. I don't have a lot of tolerance for that. If a lot of Latino students seem to fall into that category of not caring as much as they should, then certainly I would want to try to turn around their attitudes, but I would attempt to do that the same way I would with any other group. So I don't feel any differently toward Latinos than I do any other group. (INT: MT: 141 - 148)

Interestingly, although the teacher's commentary continued to deviate from the original question's intent, he felt it necessary to emphasize a point:

> I believe in folks making their own way. This country provides more opportunities than any other country on earth, and if the person is willing to work hard and has a proper attitude and does things according to law, they can be successful and they can overcome any kind of background, any kind of obstacles that might be placed in front of them along the way… [inaudible]…help themselves. (INT: MT: 148-153)

This teacher claimed that he treated all students the same, insinuating that by not doing so is a disservice to them. This lack of acknowledging students' differences or perceiving all students as "the same" (i.e., color blindness) is a topic elaborated further in the chapter.

FEELINGS OF OTHERS

This final interview question reflected the opinions of staff members regarding the feelings of their peers. Eagle High School faculty was asked: *What do you perceive to be the feelings of your colleagues?* Interestingly, the answers did not parallel the same positive tone when staff members reflected on their *own* personal feelings; indeed, the feelings they perceived their peers to have were quite different from their own. Many teachers wanted to believe that other staff members felt compassionately, while others indicated much resistance. In addition to question responses, other comments throughout the interviews are inserted in the ensuing section to evidence the findings. The following discussion illustrates the views, perceptions, and attitudes that staff members' perceive that their *colleagues possess* toward the EHS Latino student population.

Receptive

First, when asked what feelings other Eagle High School staff members held for Latino learners, the counselor replied with uncertainty in her voice (RJ):

> Am I being optimistic again? I hope sympathetic. Probably honestly I would have to say that not entirely are they, but I don't really have proof that anyone is not sympathetic toward their needs. So I'm just going to stay on the optimistic side and say that everybody wants to help. (INT: GC: 84 – 87)

Carefully choosing her words, Jenny articulated why she believed the faculty was not as understanding as they could be to Latino students' backgrounds, striving to promote more awareness throughout the school (RJ). She described, in general, that the faculty was "receptive" and continued explaining, "I don't know that they're as um… I don't know that they're as understanding of the backgrounds, the differences, and the struggles, and the way that the students have maybe arrived to River Town" (INT: ST1: 140 - 144). Jenny believed that if EHS faculty were made more aware of some of the students' backgrounds, then they might develop a

different outlook on the students' behavior, social struggles, or attitudes that ultimately affects student learning.

Mixed

Kyle perceived the feelings of the faculty as a whole as "mixed." Speaking on behalf of the Eagle High School coaching staff, he believed their feelings in relation to the Latino students were similar to his. He explained:

> We're [coaches] around some of the best of the best, too, and so we get guys like Juan who gives you everything they have and so you can't help but have a positive outlook when you're around those kinds of guys all day long. So I think that coaches and some of the teachers that get to see that side every day have more of a positive attitude. (INT: GE: 104 – 109)

However, Kyle thought that teachers who do not have the opportunity to work with Latino students may not possess the same beliefs. "I mean if you're surrounded by the ones that aren't [trying] the[ir] best every day, your judgment is going to be different than somebody who gets to be around the best of the best every day" (INT: GE: 112 – 114). Kyle believed that a teacher should build a sense of relationship with Latino students, affirming that you care about them. However, he did not think that all other teachers in the school possessed the same mindset, describing some as being "kind of stand-offish with their students" possessing the "my job is to teach and your job is to learn" philosophy (INT: GE: 195-197). Kyle continued to explain:

> I don't think Latino students respond as well to that, and I think it's because of their whole, the family thing….You know, they're taught to respect their elders, but they need a sense of relationship in that, and if you endear yourself to them, that's when you're going to get that. There are a lot of teachers that come in and don't endear themselves to their Latino students and they don't get that because they don't feel like that that teacher really cares about them. (INT: GE: 197 – 207)

The counselor discussed the importance of being more culturally sensitive to students; here her words reflected that she believed her fellow teachers have not fully grasped this concept.

> I really feel that if more of us were more knowledgeable and sensitive …we could meet

> their needs better and communicate better and could—I hate to keep using that phrase "bridge the gap," but do that. Sometimes their lack of progress is read of a lack of intelligence and it's not that at all. It's just a lack of communication. (INT: GE: 124 – 127)

As did other teachers, the Spanish teacher discerned that several teachers do not know the students as they should. Consequently, the product is not always a positive reaction; instead, teachers are left frustrated and confused, leading them to subtle and overt resistance.

Resistance

Some teachers felt that their colleagues understood what they needed to accomplish to meet Latino students' strengths and needs, but did not implement the strategies or reflect the attitudes of meeting them effectively. Referring to the strategies and methods that teachers have learned regarding the instruction of diverse learners, Kelly shared, "You know, they know what it is and what they're supposed to be doing [and] trying to do…to help them be more successful in the classroom" (INT: ET: 231-233).

Other teachers seemed to resist learning more and resented attending SIOP training. One teacher denied ever having "any Latino student that was struggling," so he did not "see a reason to make changes" (INT: GE: 163 -165). The same teacher elaborated that he did not care about SIOP and admitted that he was "more resistant to somebody just coming and structuring something for me [that] I already felt good about [and that] I had structured for myself" (INT: GE: 153 - 154). This particular teacher on multiple occasions previously shared his support of student backgrounds and culture, yet he did not believe that instructionally he needed to do anything different to enhance their educational experience.

Kelly perceived that some teachers were resistant to students that are undocumented:

> …some are still not happy because they know that some of these kids are not here legally, by legal means, that they're illegal immigrants. So there is still some negative—

> probably not like there was when I first came, but some negative feelings because of that. (INT: ET: 202 - 208)

This generalization that students are illegal immigrants is based solely on word of mouth as well as the assumption that some students must be undocumented because they do not possess a social security number. The principal confirmed that she perceived that almost half of the Latino population may be undocumented.

Declining Resistance

Nonetheless, many staff members were under the impression that much of the negativity and resistance that was once prevalent within the school has dissolved over the last few years. Overall, the principal perceived that teacher resistance to SIOP has declined, and overall, the staff has "responded well," noting that resistance was apparent only at the beginning of SIOP's implementation.

> Any time that you implement something new and you're changing their lesson plans and you're changing their instruction, they feel like you're pulling away from all the kids and that's not the case. But I think now that they've been into it a little bit, that they're much more open-minded and have not-- I've not had …lots of complaint. (INT: PRIN: 183 - 187)

As a result of more resources and support, the principal believed that teachers were better acclimated to the increasing Latino population and were more understanding to their needs. She perceived that teachers were more eager than in the past to promote successes of Latino students. Kelly, the ESL teacher, claimed that at first, teachers were resistant to learning about and serving the struggling English student population, but as a result of more access to resources, they are more supportive.

> Teachers are more comfortable now since they have more support and kids are more acclimated to school – joining sports teams, etc. I think it's more positive since I've been here, not necessarily because of me, but just because they have somebody to question. (INT: ET: 190 - 194)

Yet, Kelly claimed that "it's better now," but it is "still not perfect" (INT: ET: 195); she has worked to dispel teacher assumptions regarding undocumented students. Kelly has informed teachers, "It's not me and it's not the kids' fault…" Therefore, Kelly affirms, "I think they're less resistant to my kids, to the ESL kids. I think the general feeling now is that they're happy…So there is some negativity still there, but nothing like it was" (INT: ET: 208 - 211).

The veteran Spanish teacher illustrated the differences she saw in the faculty's attitudes toward the Spanish culture and how it has evolved in the past seven years.

> I think that has changed dramatically since I started. It was very ugly back when I started. There was great animosity and dissent, but now, everyone seems to be on the wagon. All were encouraging. Well, it even was toward me as a Spanish teacher. "Spanish. We don't need Spanish. Everybody here in the United States needs English," and that's not the point, but… So those coaches are gone. [Laughter] Now we've got them on the field and we've got them out there trying instead of being [seen as] second-class citizens…it's a much more positive place. I think we've made great strides. (INT: ST2: 135 - 145)

Overall, EHS staff members perceive that only remnants of resistance remains from staff members to accept and care for diverse populations socially and instructionally throughout the school.

ADDITIONAL THEMES

Other distinct themes emerged from the research that reflected faculty members' views, perceptions, and attitudes. Respect, care, and empathy were latent in comments that revealed some of the positive attitudes that staff members portrayed. On the contrary, some perceptions prevailed that the language barrier was the greatest inhibitor of student learning and that some Latino students were simply "resistant to learning." Last, the data also indicated that colorblindness was an omnipresent response among a few teachers as well as indifference and lack of awareness of the school's endeavors to address issues of diversity. In tandem, these themes reflected Eagle High School staff members' views of the Latino student population.

Respect *of culture, background, and social struggles*

Many of the teachers interviewed made comments that demonstrated their respect for Latino students' culture, background, and social struggles as well as how they believed their peers should respond as well. The Spanish teacher encouraged, "Let's all appreciate each other…you know, there's value in every culture" (INT: ST1: 57 – 58). Kyle emphasized his respect of students' culture by advising teachers to take a deeper interest in the lives of their Latino students. "I think the understanding of the culture and all that would help the teachers maybe try to endear themselves more. Give them a little bit more attention. Ask them a few more personal questions every now and then…" (INT: GE: 206 - 207).

Jenny seemed to share her fellow teachers' notions about how the faculty in general could improve its efforts:

> …most important are for the faculty and administration to get a better concept of what the social struggles and the elements under that umbrella, what they actually are facing because it's easy to just say, "You know what? This group of kids, all ninth graders are going to take this activity or do this one activity." Well, there are a lot of different things that you may run up against if you're socially inept or haven't been exposed to some of the things. (INT: ST1: 73 – 78)

Care *of instructional, emotional, and social well being*

Several Eagle High School teachers emanated a sense of care for their Latino students' academics as well as emotional and social well-being.

> We need to have some support in place instructionally and any other kind, whether it's emotionally or peer support or whatever, so that they can make that transition because it is difficult to do it when you're pretty much thrown into a school curriculum that's not in your native language. (INT: GC: 24 – 27)

Some teachers believe that encouragement is a critical aspect of supporting Latino student successes at school. "I think we could do a better job of trying to find things for them to do to make them feel more a part of everything" (INT: GE: 73-74). The home economics teacher

shared that it was essential to give Latino students a sense of importance, helping to reverse any negative feelings students may have that they do not fit into the existing school milieu.

> I think that they need to get a sense of…individual importance to the school. I feel like… they come to school and they get the sense that they're a burden sometimes to the rest of the population…..we need to try to get them more involved. (INT: GE: 41 - 43)

The school counselor discussed how she works to "…help get the best fit instructionally" (INT: GC: 14 - 15), working to help Latino students with residency issues find out "what their options are after high school" (INT: GC: 55).

The Spanish teacher displayed care for her students by encouraging Spanish speakers to shine in the classroom, declaring that they influence the class in a "positive manner…the class…can hear the accent," and, in turn, everyone "can enjoy learning a little bit more of the culture. So that's all a positive" (INT: SP2: 30 - 31).

By vying to motivate struggling English learners, the ESL teacher reflected her caring nature. In her classroom, she encountered Latino students worried about losing their culture; therefore, she faced the challenge of encouraging the English language while struggling to help students understand they can keep their culture as well.

> The students who…are motivated and want to learn English and want to…keep their culture but also embrace a new language and new culture excel. One even said she doesn't want to lose her Mexican culture, and so that's why she's very resistant to even learning English. She won't speak it. She won't write it. She won't, and she's been here three years and she still won't do it because she feels that if she does that, she'll lose her Latino culture. That's the challenge I face in getting these kids to be okay with learning English and to practice it and to want to learn it because they're fearful of losing their own language and culture. (INT: ET: 44 - 53)

As stated in the previous section, many teachers spoke Spanish to students to help socially bridge positive teacher-student relationships. Kyle explained that "…when I'm up teaching, I'm not thinking about throwing out Spanish words, but when I'm talking to some of my Latino kids--…just certain words will come out every once in a while (INT: GE: 260 - 263).

And finally, the math teacher shared his enjoyment of working with Latino students, displaying his care for them by encouraging their math studies and trying "to show them the same caring that I'd show any other student" (INT: MT: 136).

Empathy *for educational endeavors*

Many teachers revealed their empathetic responses toward the Latino student population for various reasons, not the least of which being the educational hardships that students may face. Becky, the Spanish teacher, sympathetically remarked that she felt much concern for Latino students, making the assumption, "I feel like it's not an easy road for them... I don't think it's an easy home life for many, so you have to just take all that into consideration…But we're caring for them and there is compassion and empathy here for them. No se qui ma" (INT: ST2: 123 -139).

Later, Becky expressed, "It's hard for them. My goodness" (INT: ST2: 117). Sometimes she speaks Spanish with students solely for the purpose that "…They have enough English during the day" (INT: ST2: 226 - 227), implying that struggling English learners need to rest their minds from the rigors of thinking in English all day.

When conversing with the EHS principal, it was obvious that she possessed compassion for the Latino student population (RJ). Repeatedly, "it's not fair" resonated throughout her commentary regarding the injustice of students having to complete state assessments when they are not proficient in the English language.

> I think the part that bothers me the most that is not fair is to require these kids at a high school level that come into the first time to Texas or the United States and then be required to pass state standards, to pass the tests…research indicates it takes six to seven years to learn a language. (INT: PRIN: 79 - 82)

She explained that the information is misconstrued regarding Latino students' drop out rates because they are not quitting school. "…That's not the true indicator of it. The truth is that

they went through their years, completed their coursework but did not pass their TAKS test. So they get a certificate of completion and they do not get a diploma" (INT: PRIN: 84 - 87). She reiterates the unfairness, urgently suggesting that students should complete the most difficult TAKS exam, the science test, in their native language. Toward the end of our conversations, she concluded:

> I just think it's an injustice to say they are identified as a dropout when they got credits. They completed their coursework [and it] does not do them a bit of good [toward graduating]. So I would like to see that changed. I really would. I don't think it's fair. I just think it's wrong. (INT: PRIN: 218 - 220)

Howard (1999) described empathy as a "healing response" that "…allows us as Whites to step outside dominance, to see our special position in a new light, and connect with the experience of others who see the river of diversity from a different perspective" (p. 73). Empathy resonates throughout EHS staff members' comments building stronger connections between diverse students and themselves.

Language Barrier

One perception that several of the faculty members possessed was that the language barrier is the predominant inhibitor of student success; hence, the primary goal should be for students to learn English before all else. The Spanish teacher observed, "There's not too much mingling socially with the other population of the school because of the language barrier" (INT: ST2: 32 – 35). Additionally, the veteran math teacher expressed, "…I believe that Latinos who are moving into this country with the intention of being here need to learn our language. They need to learn [English] and it needs to be priority number one" (INT: MT: 276-278). He proceeded to critically denote why he believed so strongly that learning English is imperative before tackling other core subject areas:

I believe priority number one when people come to these United States with the

> expectation of being here for a while…needs to be to learn our language…Now men or women that come here to work, their priority number one may be that job. They may spend eight or ten hours at that job every day, but they need to spend some time at night studying the English language. But students, the very first thing they need to do is learn the language. Should our schools be set up to help them do that? Yeah, I think so for sure. Should our schools be set up to teach them math and science in their native language? No. I do not agree with that at all. I think we need to teach them English first of all and then teach them math, science, history [etc.] in English. (INT: MT 301 - 319)

Later he attributed the language barrier as a possible reason why he has so few Latino students in his honors classes. "…Wish I [had more Latino students], but I teach upper level, honors-type classes. Maybe the language barrier has made some students a little hesitant to come into these classes. I don't know. But I wish I had more" (INT: MT: 26-28).

Danny emphasized above that the language barrier is a hardship, not only to students, but to teachers as well. Kenny concurred that struggling English learners "need to be engulfed in learning English" because "they're not going to be able to keep up if they can't understand" (INT: GE: 222-228).

Resisting Education

Some teachers also sensed student resistance and a lack of motivation to learning the English language. One teacher shared:

> Overall, I think most teachers want them [Latino students] to speak English as fast as they can, and that's true. That's the reason for them to be here, and they balk. They're not good at it, but my goodness, it's so hard for them in seven years to become fluent. It's so hard, especially when they're resisting. If it were at 100% desire, it's easy, but when there's resistance, I know many people who resist learning a foreign language… [Laughter]. (INT: ST2: 103 – 108)

Later, the Spanish teacher continued, "It's hard to express, but deep down, I do think that they need to reach out and realize that we are there for them too, and I don't think they want that. Quite a few just—they resist, which is sad" (INT: ST2: 128). However, the same teacher later retorted, "I would say the majority do fine… It's just a few [who do not]" (INT: ST2: 113).

Kelly also shared that at times students seem resistant to learning the language due to their fear of losing their culture. Another teacher more flagrantly assumes that Latino students do not care about their education:

> They need to want an education a little bit more. They need to believe that an education can provide them with opportunities that their parents didn't have, and probably secondly-- So the first thing is they need-- In my opinion, they need a different attitude about their studies, and number two, they probably need some better English language skills. (INT: MT: 58 - 62)

Ironically, this particular teacher has noted that he has had very few Latino students in his classes over the years due to his classes being predominantly upper level and honors. Therefore, the above reflects a great generalization he perceives of Latino student attitudes.

Colorblindness

The research revealed hints of colorblindness within the school setting. Only one teacher blatantly projected a smattering of comments that eluded to students all being "the same." For instance, when asked other ways that he might relate to Latino students, he replied, "Well, I would try to relate to them in the same way that I would relate to any other student" (INT: MT: 291). Many teachers hope to help students of color, "yet they are totally unable to perceive those different from themselves except through their own culturally clouded vision" (Delpit, 1995, p. xiv). Delpit (1995) purports that teachers must get away from: "I want the same for all children."

And when asked about issues of diversity, the same teacher stated, "It hasn't had an impact in my classes. It just hasn't..." (INT: MT: 39). He continued, "I had probably only one [Latino student] that I can think of off the top of my head, and I don't pay any attention. I truly don't pay any attention to whether I have whites, Latinos, blacks or whatever…" (INT: MT: 28 - 30). Another comment entailed:

> It's hard for me to really pick out differences among a group of students like Latinos…because I just see all students the same. I really and truly do, and I don't even like to, for the sake of statistics, to differentiate between groups. I really don't, but I mean I know that that's what we do. I understand that that's what we do, but I don't like to. (INT: MT: 74 - 77)

Although the math teacher does not intend to be neglectful, he does not comprehend the disservice that students experience as a result of his colorblindness. Indeed, he sincerely believes that not seeing color is a positive attribute. The math teacher refused that he would approach class differently if his classroom were more diverse. Offering another example, he explained, "If we open school next year and 20% of my students were Latinos instead of like 1% or 2% that I had this year, would that cause me to have to do things differently? I don't think so" (INT: MT: 39 – 43). He contends that he would not do anything differently, but instead continue to "…try to constantly read and respond to my students to see what their individual and collective needs are. If I deemed it necessary to do more hands-on or do more one-on-one, then I would do that (INT: MT: 44 – 47). Overall, he undoubtedly believed that there would be little need to serve students any differently (RJ).

Again, the math teacher emphasized that specialized training for addressing the needs and strengths of Latino student learners is unnecessary:

> I don't even like tracking subgroups of people statistically, so we could say, "Well, we're not reaching this group or we're not reaching this group." You know, how can we ever get to the point where we truly don't see color and we truly don't care what color a person's skin is when every time you turn around, somebody's bringing it up? I don't know. To me, that's a double message…. (INT: MT: 191 - 204)

Ladson-Billings (1994) strongly purported that White teachers must not avoid seeing color. "The passion of equality in the American ethos has many teachers (and others) equating quality with sameness" (p.33) However, "If teachers pretend not to see the students' racial and ethnic differences, they really do not see the students at all and are limited in their ability to meet

their educational needs" (Ladson Billings, 1994, p.33)

In agreement with Ladson-Billings, Paley (2000), like so many other Caucasian teachers similar to the math teacher above, thought that *seeing color* was a sign of disrespect; on the contrary, it is the reverse. Not recognizing differences devalues diverse student populations and, as Howard (1999) conveys, "We are all the same translates as 'we are all like me' " (p. 54).

Unawareness and Indifference

On occasion, some faculty members responded to questions with indifference, portraying that certain aspects of addressing diversity did not apply to them. Similarly, a few staff members were oblivious to what the school had accomplished and planned to achieve to meet the strengths and needs of Latino learners, therefore creating a more culturally sensitive environment.

When questioned about training, some teachers were unaware of any training provided by the district or high school that addressed Latino student populations instructionally or culturally. "You know, I'm not aware of that because in my field, I don't have to address that. So I don't know what all…" (INT: ST2: 174 - 175). Another teachers responded, "I don't-- I'm not really aware specifically" (INT: HC: 97).

Again, some did not identify Sheltered Observation Instruction Protocol in their response when asked what types of training had been offered. Obviously the training did not resonate with all of the teachers, although the entire teaching staff participated in the training and are currently implementing many of its practices such as SIOP structured lesson plans and displaying observation protocols. As indicated by the ESL teacher, some workshops facilitated by the ESL instructors have been provided, but not all teachers have participated.

And, as noted earlier, many teachers are under the impression that training to meet the needs and strengths of diverse learners is not applicable to them because 1) they have few

struggling English learners in their classrooms, or 2) the Latino students they have are doing fine academically.

For instance, when questioned what they felt the strengths and needs were of Latino learners, some teachers could not fully explain because that was not "their area." One teacher shared, "…You know, I just can't answer that. With my area, it's so different, so I don't know, and I don't know how others approach it. So whatever I say would be hypothetical. So I don't know" (INT: ST2: 173 - 76). Other teachers perceived that addressing diversity and culture were only meant for the Spanish classes or when classroom instruction called for bringing in ethnic foods or dress. As described earlier, some staff members' understanding was that only the teachers who had Latino students in their classrooms were affected. Missing from the conversations were staff members taking an active role in promoting diverse students' learning throughout the entire school environment at all times, not just within their individual classrooms.

When asked if strengths and needs have been adequately addressed, one teacher was not responsible for his lack of knowledge, stating that administrators, consisting of the district and the building leaders, possessed the responsibility to being decision makers:

> I have real ignorance in these areas. I really do. I'm a little bit more removed from- I mean I'm not in the decision-making part of the school, and you know, I've already explained the fact that increase in the number of Latinos that we have in school has not shown itself in my classroom. So I'm just removed from this whole thing some. But I'm trying to answer the best I can with the knowledge that I have. (INT: MT: 101 - 106)

To effectively educate diverse learners' strengths and needs, school members must collaboratively participate in discussions regarding how to best serve all students, actively pursuing the effective strategies and programs via research and training that necessitates student growth academically and socially while valuing their culture.

CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the findings on how a small, rural school staff responded to its Latino student population. The following research questions were presented:

1. How does a small, rural high school respond to its changing demographic, particularly in its Latino student population?

2. What are the faculty members' perceptions, views, and attitudes regarding the high school's Latino student population?

Chapter 5 consists of concluding remarks regarding Eagle High School's response to its demographics. The chapter reflects the school's increased and lack of support; staff members' understanding of culturally responsive teaching; difficulty in identifying student strengths; narrowed view of what inhibits learning; how their personal perceptions differed from their colleagues; and evidence of color blindness.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUDING REMARKS

If we are to achieve a richer culture…we must weave one in which each diverse human gift will find a fitting place (Margaret Mead).

Introduction

As the nation's schools become increasingly diverse (Planty et al., 2008; Dilworth & Brown, 2001; Rozema, 1994; Ward, 1994), and with the Latino student population growing rapidly (Fry & Gonzales, 2008, Planty et al., 2008), teachers often feel overwhelmed within their classrooms and seek answers to questions about how to teach diverse populations effectively. Uncertain as to how to meet diverse learners' needs and strengths (Levin, 1994, McNeil; Thousand & Nevin 1996; Wrigley, 2000), many educators feel unprepared to teach the array of students who populate their classrooms (Brunn, 2002).

As the research suggests, support is growing to meet the needs of diverse learners (Spears, Oliver, & Maes 1990), yet little research reflects if schools understand the challenges they face or how to respond to them (Levin, 1994). A school's response to the diverse populations who make up its enrollment is a compelling factor in ensuring academic success. Therefore, educators' views, attitudes, and perceptions are considered a great influence on diverse students' achievement (Dilworth & Brown, 2001; Gay, 2000). In fact, these views are a primary indicator in how successful the teacher will be in instructing his or her students. Some research has investigated teacher perceptions and beliefs in an effort to identify best practices; however, the literature continues to suggest that teachers' perspectives are missing from the discussions regarding the needs and strengths of diverse learners (Brunn, 2000). This research attempts to extract those views, adding to the educational literature regarding how to meet the needs and strengths of diverse populations; in this case, Latino students particularly are under

examination.

This study investigated how a small, rural school responded to diversity within the student population. In an effort to discern the current responses of a predominantly homogenous, white faculty, the staff members' perceptions about school response and their beliefs toward the Latino student population were analyzed. The ensuing research questions were employed to guide this study:

1. How does a small, rural high school respond to its changing demographic, particularly in its Latino student population?
2. What are the faculty members' perceptions, views, and attitudes regarding the high school's Latino student population?

The case under investigation is a small, rural high school situated in a thriving community renowned for its tourism, cafes, and antique shops along the Interstate 35 corridor. The student demographic consists of approximately 17% Latino, 80% Caucasian, and 3% African American and other. The near-homogenous educational staff is comprised of forty-five Caucasian teachers, three Latino, and one African American; none of the teachers of color instruct a core subject area (TEA, 2008b). Besides the custodial and cafeteria staff, only one other support staff member is Latino.

Currently, the school has received an Academically Acceptable rating by the Texas Education Agency for the past several years. Although the high school consistently achieves higher than the state average ratings on the majority of their TAKS exams, the Latino student sub-group has struggled in the areas of math and science, inhibiting the school from receiving a Academically Recognized rating.

The high school has experienced a steady increase in its Latino student population. More

specifically, the English Language Learner population continues to increase as well, bringing new challenges to the school system.

Qualitative methods were employed to discover answers to the inquiry. A case study design was implemented using interviews, documents, and a researcher's journal. The primary data collection method, interviews of the high school's staff members, were conducted in the spring 2009 school semester. Introspectively, the data reflected how the school has responded to its increasing diversity throughout the school, revealing educators' views and attitudes toward the Latino student population.

Findings

The research unveiled several distinct findings based on the data that emerged from the various sources. The first finding resides in increased support in the form of training, resources, and positives responses from both the school and individual teachers. However, the reciprocal was found as well; most of the faculty deemed that support was still lacking and inadequate. The second finding reveals that teachers may not be taking sufficient responsibility in supporting and promoting student learning. A third finding reflected the lack of identification and acknowledgement of student strengths. Although many teachers identified multiple strengths of the diverse students who comprise almost 17% of the school population, a few struggled recognizing them. The fourth questions whether or not Eagle High School fully understands the meaning of culturally responsive teaching practices. Many teachers defined its meaning, but did not possess a thorough understanding, nor did they implement culturally responsive teaching practices in their classrooms. Moreover, the fifth finding discovered that staff members' positive perceptions differed from the negative perceptions that they perceived of their colleagues. Additionally, the sixth finding in the data revealed that Eagle High School faculty members

possessed a narrowed view of what inhibits Latino student learning. And lastly, the final finding reveals a nuanced, partially hidden sense of "othering" and bias in their responses.

FINDING 1: INCREASED SCHOOL SUPPORT, BUT NOT ENOUGH!

In response to Eagle High School's increasing diversity, the teachers and students experienced additional school support. More personnel and resources have been added to the high school in the last few years such as hiring an ESL instructor. Additional training has also been implemented (i.e., Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol described in chapter 4). The school's administration has sought advice outside the district from other schools and the regional service center in an effort to discover new and innovative teaching strategies and ideas regarding diverse learners, attempting to share those with teachers. In addition, the faculty seemed to support student culture more than in years past (i.e., bringing the culture into particular lessons; celebrating Dia de Las Muertas and Cinco de Mayo). Overall, teachers indicated that support for diverse teaching and learning has increased.

Eagle High School faculty members have individually responded by their positive, direct support of Latino students. Many reported that particular attention was given to Latino students' well-being by valuing and respecting their culture, negating derogatory remarks, and helping students assimilate to the school environment. Many teachers reported that Latino student involvement in extra-curricular activities, athletic and academic, is at an all time high. Teachers make an effort to relate to students by using and honoring their language as well as respecting their culture. Additionally, staff members projected a sincere desire to help Latino students instructionally by implementing culture into the curriculum and thinking creatively of ways to address their academic needs.

Unfortunately, the majority of faculty members interviewed asserted that it was not

enough. Even though the school's overall consensus was that support was more prevalent, additional work was required to better support Latino students' strengths and needs. First of all, some explained that the school lacked resources; more was needed for teachers to effectively service diverse learners in their classrooms; although, particular examples of the kind of resources were rarely specified.

Eagle High School teachers attested that training was missing most from the educational milieu, not only in meeting the academic needs of Latino student learners, but in understanding their backgrounds and culture as well. This notion is reflected in research that implies that students of diverse backgrounds must have their culture considered if educators want to meet their academic needs and strengths (Berg-Tilton et al., 1996; Gay, 2000; Wrigley, 2000). Interestingly, this study also suggests that the veteran teachers focused more on Latino students' learning needs, while teachers with less experience more often revealed that Latino learners were not well-understood by all school members and that more cultural training was imperative. One of the two teachers of color often shared throughout the interviews that cultural sensitivity and awareness of student backgrounds was absent from many of the more experienced faculty members' repertoire of effectively reaching diverse learners.

Besides staff members specifically asking for more training, other indications were apparent that faculty members needed education in teaching diverse cultures. In fact, one teacher repeatedly reflected colorblindness, insisting that all students were *the same* and that he treated them all *the same*. Additionally, others retorted that diverse populations did not affect their classrooms. Together, these perceptions signify that staff members need more training in understanding the differences of their students and in culturally responsive pedagogy.

FINDING 2: NOT MY REPONSIBILITY AND PLACING BLAME

Although teachers received training in Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol and adhered to pieces of its implementation, other teachers implied that it was not applicable in their classrooms nor did they understand its benefit; therefore, a couple did not take it seriously. In addition, one teacher portrayed that culturally responsive practices were irrelevant in his classroom, while a few others implied that culturally responsive methods were employed best in a foreign language (Spanish) or ESL classroom.

A few faculty members conveyed that the school was responding to Latino student learners the best they could with the resources available to them. Some ascertained feeling "stuck," uncertain about what should be done next to address Latino student learners' needs and strengths. Similarly, other teachers expressed that it was not their responsibility but that of the administration to discover what was needed to better reach diverse learners.

The latter remarks could be perceived as making an excuse for not effectively reaching diverse learners, therefore, placing blame on the school as a whole. Many of these comments were meant to absolve faculty members from taking personal responsibility for the learning culture of the entire school. These perceptions negate contemporary research that advocates that teachers must take responsibility for positive change not only in their classrooms, but in the entire school environment (Spears, 1994; Villegas & Luca, 2002)

FINDING 3: IDENTIFYING AND ACKNOWLEDGING STUDENT STRENGTHS

Many Eagle High School teachers and administrators identified a variety of Latino students' strengths which included strong loyalty and respect, eagerness to learn, hardworking demeanor, greatness in their increasing numbers, and the Latino culture's positive influence on the school environment. Even more so, faculty members were eager to share student needs in an

effort to enhance their instructional, emotional, and social well-being.

Interestingly, though the words "needs *and* strengths" were embedded in some of the interview questions, staff members predominantly focused on what they perceived to be student *needs*. Teachers were asked as a separate question, what are student strengths? Even then, some teachers seemed to struggle with the answer; a couple actually digressed from the question, never actually identifying any strengths. Besides the lack of specifically identifying strengths, there are other examples throughout Chapter 4 of faculty members' answers focusing on what Latino students could *not* do rather than what they were capable of doing in educational settings.

Once more, the study suggests that veteran teachers had a more difficult time identifying strengths than educators with less experience. Not only did some seem to struggle with their responses, a couple digressed from the question. As one teacher adamantly asserted, he treated "all kids the same," negating any need to identify strengths specific to the Latino student population. Throughout the rest of the commentary, less affirming comments depicting student strengths were voiced by the veteran teachers compared to other staff members.

Unfortunately, the inability to identify student strengths supports the notion of the deficit syndrome; many white educators may view students of color as strength-deficient, attributing school failure to what diverse students *do not possess* and *cannot do* (Gay, 2000). Gay (2000) declares that a pedagogical paradigm (culturally responsive teaching) is needed, "…that teaches *to and through* their [diverse learners] personal and cultural strengths, their intellectual capabilities, and their prior accomplishments" (p. 24). How Eagle High School faculty members understand culturally responsive teaching is discussed more thoroughly in the next section.

FINDING 4: WHAT *IS* CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING?

Although many of the interviewees illustrated some aspects of culturally responsive

teaching, most responses were not comprehensive of the concept's full meaning. Several teachers seemed to lack in implementing culturally responsive methods in their classrooms and promoting its philosophy throughout the school. A smattering of the implementation examples shared was limited to celebrating cultural holidays, hanging diversity posters, and incorporating a few culturally related activities into instruction. These could be construed as the contributions approach, the lowest level of multicultural curriculum integration as suggested by James Banks (1993). Some faculty members mentioned the importance of considering diverse students' backgrounds and the importance of understanding their lives. However, a couple of teachers believed that supporting culture was something you could only implement effectively in a foreign language classroom, not believing that culturally responsive practices were applicable in all classrooms. Teachers seemed perplexed as to how they could apply culturally responsive practices of their own, within *all* classrooms, integrating activities and creating an environment that respected and promoted culture throughout the school's entirety (Gay, 2000).

Few teachers mentioned that culturally responsive teaching meant being socio-culturally conscious, seeing themselves as responsible for or capable of promoting equity, viewing the curriculum critically (Villegas & Luca, 2002; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Also missing from the responses were teachers' need to understand how learners construct knowledge, designing a variety of learning strategies based on student backgrounds and then stretching that knowledge into unfamiliar territory (Villegas & Luca, 2002; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Overall, it was apparent that several members of Eagle High School faculty possessed only a surface understanding of culturally responsive teaching practices, therefore, lacked in fully understanding and implementing its more inclusive meaning.

FINDING 5: PERSONAL PERCEPTIONS DIFFERED FROM THOSE OF OTHERS

Overall, teachers and administrators possessed favorable attitudes and views regarding the Latino population at Eagle High School. The data is embedded with sincere concern for Latino learners' academic, social, and emotional well-being by faculty members who frequently expressed positive affirmations regarding their diverse group of students.

Ironically, many of the favorable perceptions that faculty members held did not equate to views they perceived their colleagues possessing. Some shared that although much resistance to diversity had subsided in recent years, some resistance was still prevalent. Teachers were not as quick to share favorable responses when asked what they perceived to be the feelings of their colleagues. The data reveals that staff members chose their words carefully, and all but one interviewed articulated their personal views in a more positive fashion compared to the views they perceived of others within the school. In addition, other negative perceptions of colleagues' beliefs and attitudes were shared intermittently throughout the responses. This raises the question, what are the truths embedded in faculty members' views of others? Or, are these perceptions only applicable to one or two specific teachers within the school?

As the data suggests, the majority of the staff at Eagle High School possesses very positive attitudes toward the Latino student population. Only a few are non-receptive, unwilling to change and meet the needs and strengths of Latino student learners. Much of the evidence of resistance and negativity stems from the faculty's unawareness of diverse learners' strengths and needs. Until more training and conversations regarding diversity emerges, the school will likely continue to maintain the status quo. Thus, the negative beliefs of faculty members regarding their colleagues' feelings about the school's Latino population will continue.

FINDING 6: NARROWED VIEW OF WHAT INHIBITS STUDENT LEARNING

When questioned about Latino student needs and what the school should do now and in the future to meet those needs, much of the responses reflected the necessity for Latino students to *learn the English language*. Additionally, most of the documents analyzed for this study, such as the Campus Improvement Plan and school board agendas, contained information regarding "struggling" and "non-English-speaking" learners. Even though mastering the English language is an important factor in enhancing student success, it may exemplify a narrowed perspective for several reasons.

First, staff members were asked about "Latino students" in each interview question, never English language learners specifically. Often, faculty responses reflected the stereotype that all of the school's Latino students did not speak English. Since this limited group of students does not encompass the school's total Latino population, some faculty perceptions that all Latino students are English language learners lacks in depth and does not address what should transpire for *all* Latino learners to be successful. Additionally, it reflects an assumption made by interviewees that when they hear "Latino student" they think "language barrier." Not all Latino students at Eagle High School are non-English speakers.

Also, it seems as though the answer of "it's a language issue" or "we must teach students to be fluent first" absolves teachers from taking responsibility for all Latino students' needs and strengths. These comments insinuate directing responsibility to administration, the district, and even society in general to organize and devise programs that address the "language issue" first. Instead, teachers must recognize that the success of Latino student learners does not only reside in the "language issue," but that there are a variety of factors that may inhibit or strengthen their learning.

Only a small number of teachers referred to a perceived need to understand student backgrounds and establish a culturally conducive environment in their classrooms and within the school. It is understandable that some of the faculty identified "language barrier" as the greatest challenge because of the urgency they felt for a child to learn the language before continuing with the rest of their education, especially in light of the prominence of high-stakes tests for all students. Nevertheless, staff members should not generalize Latino learners. Instead, teachers and administrators should be cognizant that not all Latino student learners lack in the English language; there is a great deal more attributed to a Latino child's success at school besides language.

FINDING 7: PITY AND GENERALIZATION

Eagle High School faculty evidenced much concern and care for the Latino student population. Yet, some teachers perceived Latino learners to be "oppressed" and referenced them as "those poor students" which alludes that the Latino student population possesses types of deficiencies. Some of the attitudes could be construed as pity, focusing on what students are lacking. Both, again, exemplify the deficit syndrome. Successful educators of diverse learners cannot allow their focus to remain on what students lack, portraying them through a negative or stereotypical lens. Teachers must be careful that their words do not reflect student deficiencies only (i.e., language development, proper past schooling, inadequate home life, etc.). Focus must also remain on student strengths: those characteristics that diverse learners possess that enhance not only their learning environment, but the school's educational milieu.

During the interviews, on a few occasions, faculty members referred to Latino students being undocumented or illegal. From what I discovered, there is evidence that some of the Latino population at Eagle High School is undocumented; in fact, from conversations with

administration, almost half may be undocumented. However, these types of generalizations perpetuate a negative connotation of the Latino student population, making it difficult for staff members to interact with students and their families in a positive, professional manner.

Brunn's Study

Serving as an inspiration for this study, Brunn (2000) examined a small, rural school district's response to a change in their demographic by interviewing a variety of faculty members, both administration and teachers. Much akin to Brunn (2002), this study also employed the use of interviews to study educators' perceptions of an increasing Latino student population.

However, unlike Brunn's (2000) ethnographic study involving the school experiencing a rapid influx in their Latino student population, Eagle High School's demographic change was gradual and steady. Brunn's (2000) research was more comprehensive; he interviewed more staff members and conducted observations of teachers as well, focusing on the belief systems of the faculty toward the reform efforts devised by various members of the school system. Whereas my study attended to Eagle High School's response to change in general, focusing on staff members' overall perceptions and attitudes toward their Latino student population, Brunn (2000) examined the process of creating a program designed to respond to the demographic influx of the district and the reorganized beliefs systems that transpired as a result of the newly developed program. One critical piece that Brunn sought to discover were the perspectives of teachers he asserted were missing from contemporary literature regarding the change that their school experienced. My study's goal was to add to this body of research, uncovering the views and perceptions of small, rural school educators toward their growing Latino student population.

Similar themes emerged from my data that correlated with those of Brunn's such as

academic programs and instruction, need for cultural understanding, language, extra-curricular involvement, professional development and training, as well as instructional materials and resources. Unlike the discoveries of Brunn, little of my data reflected themes relating specifically to programs for parents, assessment and placement, and pedagogy.

Implications and School Recommendations

Much of this study contributes to the contemporary literature regarding teachers experiencing increasing diversity in schools. Particularly, it adds to the body of literature pertaining to white teachers in small, rural schools responding to diverse learners, particularly in growing Latino student populations. Teachers' views, perceptions, and attitudes are analyzed, adding to the body of research that lacks in teacher perspectives of addressing the needs and strengths of diverse learners. The investigation's results can be helpful to educational researchers and policy makers, administrators and teachers, as well as complement pre-service teacher and professional development programs. Although the research revealed much of what we know about white teachers educating diverse learners, the findings provoked some major implications. As a result of these findings, there are several recommendations that would benefit Eagle High School's faculty response to diverse learners as well as other similar schools.

First, not only should conversations continue regarding the implementation of a bilingual program or possible co-op with neighboring districts, but more importantly, the dialogue must soon come to fruition. Although, at times, some staff members at Eagle High School insinuated that they were baffled, unsure of what to do next to serve diverse learners, many offered suggestions that have not been implemented. This indicates that many faculty members of Eagle High School know what should be accomplished; now it is a matter of coming together and making the suggestions happen.

Eagle High School staff continuously referenced non-English speakers throughout their commentary, implying that language needs are of the greatest significance to benefiting student success. Therefore, Eagle High School must continue to evaluate their teaching practices and the curriculum utilized for English language learners. Requiring all high school teachers to receive ESL certification could be another district endeavor. The district could pay for state certification courses and exams so that all teachers were certified to instruct ESL students.

The role of the current ESL instructor should change as well. Since the ESL teacher seems to be the primary source for the school regarding advice, resources, and professional development for English language learners, she should serve as a conduit between teachers and administrators, working more closely with principals who will in turn establish and promote more collaboration between the ESL instructor and subject areas teachers. Currently, the high school ESL teacher divides her time throughout the course of a day between teaching ESL classes and supporting teachers within their classroom. Time must be allotted within the campus schedule so that the ESL and classroom teachers have the opportunity to devise curriculum and instruction that reflect effective ESL strategies. Instead of the ESL teacher being perceived as a resource that teachers may access for support of diverse learners, the culture of the school should transform so that the ESL teacher works in a partnership with classroom teachers, continuously collaborating with them to create and implement instruction that best meets the needs and strengths of the ESL students.

Additionally, more parent outreach is necessary. Although a translator has been hired and many more documents are translated in Spanish, it is not enough. More correspondence to Spanish speaking families in their native language is critical. Also, Latino families must be encouraged to be a part of their child's learning and future. For example, Eagle High School

should initiate a beginning of the year meet and greet or Open House for Spanish speaking parents, send Connect Ed messages and the end-of-the-year parent survey in Spanish, and promote a college night/informational for Latino families. All would draw Spanish speaking parents to the school, allowing them to voice their concerns and be a part of their child's learning environment. Last, celebrating and honoring the heritage of local families by acknowledging and promoting ethnically diverse holidays within the school and throughout the community should continue.

A few teachers expressed the need for teachers to learn basic Spanish. The school could continue the original workshop that the Spanish teacher once conducted that taught staff members basic Spanish; however, this workshop needs to be ongoing throughout the course of an entire semester or year. Teachers might receive professional development hours for their participation. Also, teachers could also complete a self-paced module developed by the curriculum specialist on Rosetta Stone that would grant them professional development hours upon completion. And last, the high school could offer onsite university courses in Spanish.

Most importantly, although specialized training and professional development related to working with diverse learners has occurred within the school system, it is evidently not enough. Teachers and administrators must be immersed in training regarding culturally responsive teaching and pedagogy. Administrators should vigorously seek training in implementing culturally responsive practices campus-wide, finding ongoing professional development opportunities for their teachers that can be implemented at school. Not should teachers receive direct instruction in the methods and practices necessary for reaching Latino learners, they must also acquire a better understanding of the worlds of students that differ from themselves.

White teachers must be prompted to reflect on their past histories, understanding the

reality that with their ethnicity stems societal privilege and power. With that in mind, all Eagle High School teachers must learn to respect and consider the culture and backgrounds of their students throughout the school's entirety. In addition, all teachers must take an active responsibility in promoting social justice within their classrooms, discovering all students' unique differences and empowering their strengths. Understanding how teachers' perceive their own backgrounds and how this perception can positively or negatively affect their classrooms would greatly benefit the faculty of Eagle High School and other similar school systems.

In conclusion, administration should establish a task force or committee that studies, analyzes, and discusses the needs *and* strengths of Latino learners, employing their findings to devise a plan of action and implement further training and programs. Additional discussions within the school must transpire pertaining to meeting diverse learners' academic and cultural needs as well as conversations regarding teachers' perceptions and roles in diverse settings. These spaces for dialogue must be created, supporting culturally responsive practices and individual action in and out of the classroom.

Limitations

Although qualitative research provides a rich description of the topic under scrutiny, it does not reflect a comprehensive picture. By analyzing only one case, the research is greatly narrowed; hence, the findings cannot be generalized to other cases. In addition, capturing the response of a school toward its Latino student population is complex. Because only a handful of faculty members were selected for interviews, there may be a lack of perspectives represented. Therefore, perspectives must stand alone and should not serve to represent the entire school population.

Most importantly, my role as a former administrator in the school and current

administrator in the district may have inhibited some faculty members from candidly responding. During the interviews, it was apparent that faculty members thought deeply before answering and, at times, were hesitant in their responses. This may be attributed to a natural instinct to contribute information in a politically correct fashion, carefully choosing their words so as not to sound offensive or to mask their true opinions.

More evidence that signifies that staff members were careful in choosing their words during the interviews stems from the dialogue that evolved *after* the recorder was turned off. Some interviewees were eager to share more critical thoughts and opinions than they were during the interview once they knew they were no longer being recorded. Therefore, this is evidence of members retaining honest information; there are thoughts and opinions absent from the interview commentary.

Recommendations for Future Research

In an attempt to better understand school response to demographics, I suggest that research of this sort be conducted in similar school settings. The results could be compared and contrasted to like schools so as to devise better plans for homogenous, small, rural schools responding to demographics.

Future research could also be conducted within this school, examining the school more comprehensively. For instance, additional staff members could be interviewed. Also, to extract more candid and natural responses from faculty members, additional data gathering techniques could be employed such as focus groups or observations. To ensure anonymity and increase research validity, staff member might complete a questionnaire or survey.

In addition to teachers, interviewing and/or observing Latino students within the school would enhance the study. Taking into account the perspectives and attitudes of students of color

toward their educational environment is a significant factor in discerning how the school might positively respond to diverse populations.

Additionally, it would be advantageous for this research to extend into a longitudinal study; over time it would be interesting to see possible changes in this school's response and belief systems.

Final Comments

The suggested findings reveal how Eagle School High school *has* and *has not* responded to diverse learners' needs and strengths; however, my interpretation of the literature is that this is a common phenomenon that many schools with similar student and faculty demographics face.

In closing, John Dewey (1938) articulates:

> Teachers are the agents through which knowledge and skills are communicated and rules of conduct enforced….It is the business of the educator to see in what direction an experience is heading. (p. 38)

I hope that my filter of the research will enhance the understanding of a small school's response to teaching diverse populations, inspiring educators to take responsibility of their agency, creating positive experiences for diverse learners as Dewey contends. Over the course of my studies and professional experience, I have discovered that instead of embarking on a quest to create *sameness* in our educational institutions, we must celebrate the beauty of our different cultures, continuously striving to construct learning environments that embrace student differences and encourage dialogue regarding diversity. Those of us who are white educators, originating from cultural backgrounds that differ from the students of color we teach, cannot possibly understand their worlds completely. Conversely, it is this realization which will allow us to become more conscientious and considerate of their culture and personal history, ultimately becoming more effective teachers of diverse populations.

APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

1. Have you experienced a change in demographics, particularly in the Latino student population, while teaching/working at this school? If so, what is that change?
2. How does diversity (i.e., Latino student population) affect your classroom? What challenges do you face?
3. What do you feel are the needs of the school's Latino Students population? Strengths?
4. How has your school responded to the increase in the Latino student population?
5. What have you particularly done to respond to Latino students' needs and strengths?
6. What are your feelings toward the Latino population in your school?
7. What do you believe to be the attitudes and perceptions of your colleagues toward the Latino student population?
8. What types of training have been offered to address Latino student learners' strengths and needs? Have you participated? What other training would you like to see?
9. Do you feel that the needs and strengths of Latino student learners have been adequately addressed? Why or why not? Explain.
10. What future needs do you anticipate?
11. Do you speak Spanish? Do ever use the Spanish language or words with students? If not, describe other ways your might try to relate to Latino students in your school.
12. Define culturally responsive teaching. What does this look like in your classroom?

APPENDIX B: EAGLE HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS

Cast of Characters

Administration

Kathy: Principal of EHS for 8 years. Total years in education – 30. Previous assistant principal at EHS for 2 years; teacher and assistant principal at elementary 5 years. Previously taught in South Texas for 15 years before moving to River Town. *Caucasian*

Judy: Counselor at EHS for 2 years. Total years in education – 30. Previously taught and counseled in South Texas. *Caucasian.*

Teachers

Kelly: ESL teacher at EHS for 4 years. Total years in education – 14. Previously taught biology and special education in other school systems. *Caucasian.*

Jenny: Spanish teacher at EHS for 1 year. Total 6 years at EHS. Previous Communities in Schools Director at EHS for 3 years and ESL aid for 2 years. Raised in River Town, graduating from EHS in 1989. *Latino*.

Becky: Spanish teacher at EHS for 7 years. Total years in education – 33 (23 in public schools and 10 at the university). Masters and ABD in Foreign Language. Current Spanish Club advisor. *Caucasian*.

Lydia: Home Economics teacher at EHS for 4 years. Total years in education – 28; previously taught Home Economics in urban schools (24 years). Raised in River Town, graduating from EHS in 1976. *African American*.

Danny: Math teacher of 38 years at Eagle High School. Total years in education – 38. Serves as EHS math department chair and previous UIL coordinator for several years. Born and raised in River Town area, graduating in 1968. *Caucasian.*

Kyle: Government/economics teacher at EHS for 3 years. Total years in education – 10. EHS Head basketball coach. *Caucasian*.

Appendix C: Cited River Town Documents

Document 1: School Board Agendas April 2008 – June 2009

Document 2: 2008 - 09 River Town Independent School District Improvement Plan

Document 3: High School Campus Improvement Plan 2008 - 2009

Document 4: River Town Independent School District Web Site

Document 5: River Town Independent School District 2006 - 07 Annual Report

Document 6: River Town ISD Goals 2005 - 2006

Document 7: Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol Power Point Workshop Handout, Spring 2008

Document 8: Email from High School Principal, 9/2009

Document 9: Email from High School ESL Instructor, 10/12/09, 9/7/09

Document 10: Email from High School Counselor, 10/9/09

Document 11: Email from High School High School Spanish Teachers, 9/2009

Document 12: ELL Meeting Agendas between River Town and Nearby District, April 12 and March 27, 2009

Document 13: Teacher Survey Results Spring, 2007

Document 14: High School Power Point Presentation to School Board, Spring 2008

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